

**9 PM**

# **Compilation**

**18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2022**

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# General Studies Paper – 1

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### General Studies - 1

#### 1. [With India set to become most populous nation, a prosperity lesson](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“With India set to become most populous nation, a prosperity lesson”** published in the **Indian Express** on **17th July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Population and associated issues.

**Relevance:** Population control policies.

**News:** Three years ago, the [UN Population Prospects \(2019\)](#) projected that India will surpass China’s population by 2027. But the latest United Nations report, “Population Prospects” forecasts that India will surpass China’s population by 2023 and also reach 1.5 billion by 2030 and 1.66 billion by 2050.

What are the socio-economic reforms carried out by China?

#### **Economic Reforms**

**Agriculture:** China started its economic reforms in 1978 with a primary focus on agriculture. It broke away from the commune system and liberated agri-markets from myriad controls.

During 1978-84, China’s agri-GDP grew by 7.1% per annum and farmers’ real incomes grew by 14% per annum with the liberalisation of agri-prices. As farmers’ real incomes doubled, poverty fell by half in just six years.

**Industries:** Enhanced incomes of rural people created a huge demand for industrial products. The aim of China’s manufacturing through **Town and Village Enterprises (TVEs)** was basically to meet the surging demand from the hinterlands.

**One-child policy:** China introduced the one-child per family policy in 1980, which lasted till early 2016. This policy led to a rapid increase in per capita incomes. Chinese population growth today is just 0.1 per cent per annum compared to India’s 1.1 per cent per annum.

**Socio-Economic benefit:** In 1978, when China embarked on its economic reforms, its per capita income was at \$156.4 which was way below that of India at \$205.7. Today, China is more than six times ahead of India in terms of per capita income – China’s per capita income in 2021 was \$12,556, while that of India was \$1,933 in 2020.

**Must read:** [The UN World Population Prospects Report and Population Issues in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why India is lagging behind China in Agriculture?

Over a 40-year period, 1978-2018, China’s agriculture has grown at 4.5% per annum while India’s agri-GDP growth ever since reforms began in 1991 has hovered at around 3% per annum.

**Market and price liberalisation** in agriculture still remains a major issue. For instance, the government did not promote exports and impose stock limits on traders, and suspend futures markets. All this strangles markets.

All this is reflected in the **“implicit taxation” of farmers** to favour the vocal lobby of consumers, especially the urban middle class.

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

How India can control the population, and what are the challenges and impacts?

The only way is through effective education, especially that of the girl child, open discussion and dialogue about family planning methods and conversations about the benefits of small family size in society. But this has the following challenges,

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**Low education:** As per the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21), of all the girls and women above the age of 6 years, only 16.6% were educated for 12 years or more.

**Poor quality:** Several ASER reports point to the poor quality of education in India.

**Low-level income trap:** The NFHS-5 data shows that more than 35% of our children below the age of five are stunted, which means their earning capacity will remain hampered throughout life. They will remain stuck in a low-level income trap.

With this dismal status of women's health and education, the future of children in India is itself a challenge.

**Read more:** [Measures to control population in India](#)

How India can prosper?

India needs **a)** A focused and aggressive campaign launched to educate the girl child and provide her with more than 12 years of good quality education, **b)** An increase in subsidy for the education of the girl child.

This will significantly boost the labour participation rate of women, which is currently at a meagre 25%, and lead to **"double engine" growth**.

### 2. [India to become most populous nation by 2023: Reading the figures](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article **"India to become most populous nation by 2023: Reading the figures"** published in the **Indian Express** on **19th July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Population and associated issues.

**Relevance:** Population control policies.

**News:** The earlier UN reports in the middle of the Nineties projected that India's population will be 1.53 billion in 2050 and maintained this till the first decade of the 21st century. But the latest United Nations report, ["Population Prospects"](#) forecasts that India will surpass China's population by 2023.

**Must read:** [The UN World Population Prospects Report and Population Issues in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are some key insights into India's population?

**Population stabilisation:** National Population Policy envisages that India's population will stabilise in 2045. But, scholars and organisations have predicted that population stabilisation will take place below 1.6 billion by the mid-50s.

**Distribution of the population by age:** This plays a significant part in shaping future development dynamics. India's large segments comprise the young and elderly, whose engagement in gainful economic activities is minimal. This shows India's dependency ratios are high.

**Dependency ratio:** The World Bank data also shows that during 1960-2021, the dependency ratio declined from 75% to 55% globally. For India, the Bank has reported a figure of 48% in 2021. The latest PLFS survey has estimated the dependency ratio as much lower, at 44.3% only. The dependency tends to go up systematically till 2100.

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

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What is the link between dependency ratio and economic development?

Lower dependency implies an economic advantage to a nation. For instance, an economically active population produces dividends leading to intergenerational income transfers.

But the **dependency ratio based on age structure alone can be misleading** when a substantial portion of the working-age population is not economically active or in subsistence employment.

In the age group 15 to 64, India has just 55% reporting any kind of employment in India. Hence, India **needs to find decent work for the working-age population**, particularly women and socially marginalised groups.

**Read more:** [Measures to control population in India](#)

### 3. [Tunnel vision that is endangering India's history](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “Tunnel vision that is endangering India's history” published in **The Hindu** on **20<sup>th</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 1 – Art and Architecture in India

**Context:** The article criticizes the planned revision to Section 20 of the ‘Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains’ Act.

Section 20 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act of 1958 was amended in 2010.

It prohibits construction within a 100-metre radius of all Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)-protected monuments. Furthermore, it regulates activities within another 300-metre radius.

Now, the expert committees will decide on the extent of the prohibited and regulated areas around each monument and the activities permitted.

#### **How ancient monuments are connected to the surrounding landscape?**

ASI protects around 3,700 archaeological sites and ancient monuments from across the history, as per the provisions of the law. Historically, each monument was integrally connected to the landscape around it. For example;

1. Rock-cut sanctuaries from Barabar (Bihar) to Ajanta (Maharashtra) and from Masrur (Himachal Pradesh) to Guntupalli (Andhra Pradesh) were physically connected to outcrops and canyons.
2. Pattadakal's temples (Karnataka) were symbolically linked to the Malaprabha River.
3. Lucknow's imambaras were tied to markets, palaces, processional roads, and gardens.

During colonial times, after 1857, some of the dwellings around monuments, they were interested in, were removed by the British. Thus, the connection weakened during this time.

However, ASI-protected sites have served diverse needs after the independence:

4. The grounds of the Purana Quila and other iconic buildings gave refuge to tens of thousands of individuals arriving from newly-formed Pakistan.
5. After the resettlement of refugees, these grounds emerged as public spaces for exercise, prayer meetings, protests, and more.
6. The green edges around Delhi's protected monuments became havens for migratory birds, small mammals, and a host of reptiles and amphibians.

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For a well-trained historian, the earth around an archaeological site or ancient monument is like a text. If the soil around artefacts is disturbed, their contexts are destroyed, making new research more difficult.

### **What could be the implications of changing the landscape?**

Changing the landscape around ASI-protected monuments into industrial, commercial, or even residential plots will thus deprive human and animal communities of much-needed commons.

Permitting construction work risks weakening the foundations of centuries-old edifices.

### **What are some of the model examples of landscape conservation in India?**

Conservation architect Ritish Nanda's team at **Humayun's Tomb in Delhi** by their conservation efforts provided meaningful employment to an entire basti.

**Odisha's government** has formulated a scheme to protect a cluster of ancient temples, tanks, and ponds to nurture a sense of regional identity, restore habitats, and bring in visitors in a methodical way.

**At the ancient city of Nagaur, Rajasthan**, local artisans, and multidisciplinary teams have worked together to conserve a citadel, reopen ancient gates, plant trees, and promote a lively bazaar outside its main entrance. It gave a new lease of life to a medieval complex and strengthening social fabrics.

Thus, efforts must be made to protect the monuments together with the surrounding landscape.

#### 4. [Urban woes and construction catastrophe](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "Urban woes and construction catastrophe" published in the Live Mint on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 Urbanization in India; GS 3 Infrastructure; Cities

**Relevance:** City Development

**News:** Recently, the United Nations released its report titled the **World Population Prospects 2022**. The population in India is expected to surpass China's by 2023. Thus, the urban population is also going to increase in the coming years.

In 2020, around 35% of the Indian population was already living in cities. However, the number of urban dwellers is set to increase with the **population rise in India**.

Some key determinants behind rapid urbanisation are **economic development** and **growth**, and investment in cities.

### **Problems in Indian Cities**

There are issues like traffic, repeated road closures, and diversions due to construction and congestion. The issues negatively impact the liveability of a place.

### **Noida Case**

The Comptroller and Auditor General's "**Performance and Audit Report on Land Acquisition and Allotment of Properties in Noida, Uttar Pradesh**" stated:

**(1)** There has been complete disregard for **basic tenets of governance** viz., adherence to the public interest, accountability, transparency in decision making, ethics, and integrity in Noida.



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(2) There were instances of “**contravention of law**” and “**wilful concealment of facts**”.

(3) There has been a nexus between the **authorities** and **builders**, as well as **multiple violations** that went unchecked, resulting in massive losses for the government and distress for the people.

Further such brazen corruption and disregard for the law are not peculiar to Noida itself.

### Case of Gurugram

Despite being a **modern infrastructural marvel** with its high-rise structures and capable of offering affordability to luxury to everyone. The cities faced issues:

(1) The long traffic hours on the **National Highway** connecting Delhi and Gurugram due to congestion. Further, alternative routes are also full of traffic and jam due to the **closure of main roads** on account of more construction.

(2) The rampant constructions are causing **profound environmental costs**, like the declining groundwater table in the city and the low availability of potable water.

(3) Also, there are issues of water scarcity, poor drainage infrastructure, and roadblocks.

### What are the causes of such issues in every city?

**Role of private players:** The **private developers** are not only monopolising a resource, but dominating the whole process of urbanisation for their own advantages. **For Example**, In **Gurugram**, the companies are involved in the **construction** and use of a part of the **main roads**, leading to **traffic** and **congestion**. Their power is their **wealth** and the **vested interests** of the few.

**Urban planning** has been poor in India. The plans are poorly designed and lead to environmental degradation. For example, the Punjab Land Preservation Act was amended to open up 33% of the forest land, including over 16,000 acres of the Aravalli Forests in Gurugram.

**Poor city design** greatly influences the kind of inequities and spatial relations produced in that region.

### What should be done?

Undeniably, **cities need to expand** as the population living in them would increase. But the **smart city design** should ensure equitable access to everyday necessities and sources of leisure. These should be restricted to a few or should not be entirely cut off.

There should be soft policy actions to regulate **land allocation processes** and **foster transparency**.

Smart **city designs** need to prioritize facilitating **movement** and **accessibility** and **enhance the quality of life**. The transport infrastructure should be strengthened in a way that it positively impacts the attractiveness of a city.

Further, the government should build more and **better housing facilities**, schools, hospitals, working spaces, and markets, ensuring access to safe drinking water and water management, and reducing pollution in the Indian Cities.

There should be **assertive policy actions**. This would be to make sure that public assets remain with the public. Public assets should be managed by the public sector to ensure that resources are properly regulated and not captured.

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Further, **urban local governance** should be made more **accountable** and **transparent**.

Further, the city development should be based on **ease of living** for its people and not profits for its developers.

### 5. [Incentivize the world's farmers to improve soil health](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article **“Incentivize the world’s farmers to improve soil health”** published in the **Live Mint** on **21st July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 Salient features of World’s Physical Geography; and GS 3 Ecology and Environment

**Relevance:** Soil Health

**News:** Recently, **‘Conscious Planet: Save Soil’**, a global movement to change the narrative around soil, was launched.

As part of this movement, the Indian spiritual leader has embarked on a motorcycle journey across 27 countries, covering 30,000 km in 100 days. It was to raise awareness and recommend policy changes that would ensure a **minimum of 3–6% organic content** in soil everywhere.

#### **Trends of soil degradation**

For any soil to have agricultural potential, it must have a **minimum of 3-6% organic** content. However, in large parts of the world, **organic content is well below 1%**.

There is not a single country across the world that has soil with a minimum of 3% organic content. In the last 25 years, an estimated 10% of the earth’s land has become desert.

#### **What are the underlying causes behind such a high level of soil degradation?**

At present, agricultural scientists, universities, and agricultural departments address soil as a **‘material’**. They see soil from the perspective like ‘Soil just needs a little more nitrogen, a little more potassium, a little more phosphorus.’ However, they ignore that soil needs living organisms. It is from this **microbial** life that all other life on this planet has evolved.

Every year, on an average, 27,000 species in the soil habitat are going extinct across the world.

#### **What are the possible consequences of inadequate organic content in the soil?**

The **United Nations agencies** say that there will be no agricultural soil left to grow anything in another 50-60 years because the **organic content of the soil** is in deep decline

Over the last 20 years, about **300,000 farmers** have **committed suicide** in India. Further, even in the **US**, farmers account for the **highest number of suicides** among all professions.

#### **Outcomes of the movement**

Many United Nations agencies and Nine Countries have signed **memoranda of understanding (MOUs)** with Conscious Planet: Save Soil.

About 74 nations committed themselves to the urgent cause of saving the planet’s soil at the **15th session** of the **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Conference of Parties (CoP-15)**.

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

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- (1) If we want to reclaim soil, it needs to be understood that soil is living, not dead material.
- (2) Every nation could set up 3% **organic content** as a **minimum average** for the soil. Further, every government should provide incentives for every farmer in the world to work actively towards a **minimum of 3–6% organic content** in agricultural soil.
- (3) At the CoP-15 session, a **three-pronged incentive scheme** for farmers was proposed.
  - (a) The government can provide attractive incentives for farmers to aspire to get there.
  - (b) Industry and business could facilitate carbon credit systems as a second line of incentives for farmers.
  - (c) The third level can be addressed by changing the way food is labeled in consumer markets. The agencies should measure the organic content of the soil. Then, agricultural products grown on tracts of land that have reached 3% organic content should be labeled.

### 6. [Exploration, imports, private firms: India's search for lithium spreads out](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article **“Exploration, imports, private firms: India's search for lithium spreads out”** published in the **Business Standard** on 23rd July 2022.

**Syllabus:** **GS 1 Distribution of key mineral resources; and GS 3 Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life; Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology.**

**Relevance:** Li-Batteries Technology' Lithium Minerals; EV Technology etc.

**News:** Recently, the Centre has listed a bill in the parliament related to mining sector reforms. It is expected to allow private companies to dig for lithium.

Lithium called as **“white gold”** is an essential component in electric car batteries and 74% of overall global production is used in battery production.

Across the world, there is a rush to find Lithium. Therefore, the Indian government is also promoting the same.

#### **Estimate of Lithium Resources Global**

According to the **US Geological Survey**, a total of about 89 million tonnes (mt) of lithium reserve is available worldwide. The top countries with resources are Bolivia (21 mt), Argentina (19 mt), Chile (9.8 mt), US (9.1 mt), Australia (7.3 mt), and China (5.1mt).

#### **Lithium reserves in India**

According to government data, no reserves or resources of lithium-bearing metals are so far part of the national-mineral inventory.

#### **Measures Taken for exploration of Lithium reserves in India**

The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** has carried out **14 projects** on lithium and associated elements in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Karnataka, and Rajasthan during the **field season programme (FSP)** 2016-2017 to 2020-2021.

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The GSI has also carried out 5 projects in Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Rajasthan during FSP 2021-22.

The **Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMDER)** has carried out preliminary surveys and limited subsurface exploration projects in **Marlagalla** in **Mandya district of Karnataka**. The surveys have shown the first traces of lithium resources of 1,600 tonnes in the country. But the reserves found are classified in the **“inferred category”**. Therefore, the associated confidence level is low.

### **Other measures taken by the government to solve India’s Lithium problem**

Australia is the largest country in terms of production. Therefore, India and Australia agreed to undertake due diligence on greenfield and brownfield lithium and cobalt mineral assets, looking at **India’s long-term clean energy roadmap**.

Australia had signed a deal to supply India with critical minerals needed for the new-energy economy.

Further, Indian companies are also tying up with suppliers in countries that have major resources.

India has planned to set up a Giga factory for lithium-ion cell manufacturing in India by 2024. The Li-mineral will be sourced from mines in South America, Africa, and Australia.

Further, in addition to the above, a number of companies have signed MOUs to set lithium-ion up battery plants and cell technology in India, in the last 3-4 years.

The **PLI scheme ‘National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage’** is also aimed at reducing imports by building a manufacturing capacity of 50-gigawatt hour (GWh).

### **India’s Import of Lithium**

India’s EV Sector is dependent on imports. Lithium is primarily imported in the form of **lithium-ion batteries** for EVs and **energy storage systems (ESS)**.

India’s imports of lithium and lithium-ion in FY21 stood at Rs 8,984 crore in FY21 and increased to Rs 13,838.22 crore in FY22.

**Source Countries:** China and Hong Kong are the major sources from where India imports.

### **What are the challenges?**

Globally, the demand for Li-battery has surged, Therefore, the prices of lithium carbonate, used in rechargeable lithium batteries, have also surged a lot. For example, in the last year, prices of **Chinese lithium carbonate** increased by more than **400 percent** as demand outstripped supply.

There is a plan for 30% **EV sales penetration** by 2030. Therefore, the demand for lithium is expected to surge. And it is going to be dependent on Lithium imports.

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# General Studies Paper –2

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## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of July, (Third Week) 2022

### General Studies - 2

#### 1. [Questions about I2U2](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Questions about I2U2**” published in **Business Standard** on **17th July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Organisations and groupings.

**Relevance:** About the I2U2.

**News:** Recently, the virtual meeting of the I2U2 leaders took place.

What is the I2U2 Summit?

**Read here:** [India, Israel, US, UAE are I2U2, summit next month](#)

What are the advantages of the I2U2 summit for India?

**1)** Helps in broadening and deepening the already cordial political and economic relations with Israel and the UAE, **2)** I2U2 will align closely with the Indian broad policy goals in sectors such as health, water, and transportation, **3)** Enhance basic physical and social infrastructure. For instance, India collaborated with Israel on drip irrigation projects in Gujarat.

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

What are the challenges associated with the I2U2 summit for India?

India might face challenges in balancing India's geopolitical equilibrium. For example, Israel views I2U2 as a step towards augmenting opposition to Iran. The growth of I2U2 might create a potential challenge for India to develop India-Iran relations.

**Read more:** [I2U2 And The Middle Power Great Game](#)

Does I2U2 have a security dimension?

No, the I2U2 has not yet acquired a security dimension. But the US views I2U2 as a complement to its China-centred security initiatives in the Indo-Pacific(Quad). Further, I2U2 is also referred to as a “western Asian Quad.” So, there is a high possibility like Quad, the I2U2 might acquire a security dimension.

**Note:** Initially the Quad started as a joint response to the devastation in the region caused by the Tsunami in 2004.

What does India need to do?

Given the tensions between India and China, India has to downplay the idea of a West Asian Quad and focus on the collaborations that will enhance the country's developmental needs.

**Read more:** [India to give land for I2U2-backed food parks](#)

#### 2. [The Agniveer's journey](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**The Agniveer's journey**” published in the **Indian Express** on **17th July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

**Relevance:** Agnipath Scheme.

**News:**

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Recently, the government of India introduced a new recruitment scheme for the armed forces, [Agnipath](#).

**Must read:** [Agnipath Scheme: Need, Benefits and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the advantages of the Agnipath scheme?

**1)** Until now more than half of India's defence budget is spent on pensions, while just around 5% is earmarked for research and development. This situation will change after the implementation of Agnipath. **2)** A significant number of Agniveers will be employed in paramilitary forces, and their service and training will be recognised as a degree.

**Must read:** [How can Agnipath be made more attractive? Recommendations from 2 former army leaders](#)

What are the outcomes of the US's Tour of Duty scheme?

**a)** According to the US National Institute for Drug Abuse, almost 20% of the veterans coming out of the US's tour of duty scheme suffer from homelessness and mental health issues compared to the rest of the population, **b)** Veterans who are unable to readjust well with civilian life have been involved in violent, organised crime and even terrorist activities. For instance, World War II veterans formed the Hells Angels (an "outlaw" motorcycle club). Similarly, On his return, a decorated pilot in the Vietnam War, has joined the Ku Klux Klan(KKK) and is now one of the leading ideologues for racist organisations.

**Read more:** [Arun Prakash writes: Agnipath, between the lines](#)

What are the lessons India needs to learn from the Tour of Duty scheme?

**1)** The free market may pay lip service to patriotic sentiments, but it does not give salaries or jobs based on them, **2)** As a large number of armed forces gig workers come out of their service, the agniveers will need assistance with their social and psychological readjustment, **3)** The movie Rambo highlighted the "war vet" genre. I.e., the stories of soldiers who come back to a world that does not, cannot understand them. Hence, India must address such incidents.

**Read more:** [Will Agnipath energise or demoralise the military?](#)

Serious consideration and resources must be put in place to help agniveers to readjust. Further, India needs to provide assistance in mental health, community and vocational therapy.

### 3. [The monkeypox outbreak is an alert on global health inequities](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the following articles "**What monkeypox alarm tells us about global health inequality**" published in **The Livemint** on **18th Jul 22**.

"**How India can keep the monkeypox threat at bay: Precautionary vaccines for healthcare workers, disease surveillance and communication are essential**" published in **The Times of India** on **17th Jul 22**.

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

**Relevance:** Monkeypox outbreak and related issues

**Context:** Despite causing deaths and being regularly reported from endemic African countries, Monkeypox got global attention only when high-income countries got affected.

The total number of suspected cases reported by the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2022 alone are manifold more than any other country affected by the ongoing outbreak.

Unfortunately, this phenomenon is not an isolated story of its kind.

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Reasons for global outbreak

This is the first time that such a large number of monkeypox cases have been detected in non-endemic countries.

It could partially be attributed to **a)** decrease in immunity provided by smallpox vaccination, **b)** increase in RT-PCR testing post Covid pandemic and **c)** increased global travel.

One of the other possible reasons could be new mutations in the virus, although preliminary supporting data is weak.

What are the global health inequities?

**Disproportionate attention to diseases affecting developed countries:** There are a number of diseases in low- and middle-income countries that affect a large proportion of their populations, but get disproportionately less attention from the global community.

This is a challenge recognized as the '10/90 gap'

– It states that diseases and health problems that constitute roughly 10% of the global disease burden but affect people mostly in rich countries receive 90% of the overall health research attention and funding.

However, health problems that constitute 90% of the world's burden of disease but affect mainly low- and lower-middle income countries get merely 10% of the attention and funds.

**Example:** A specific example is a group of about 17 diseases, which include leprosy, Lymphatic filariasis and rabies, collectively called '**neglected tropical diseases**' or NTDs. These diseases have long been a major health problem in low and low-middle income (LMIC) countries, but have not received sufficient/commensurate attention in health policies and financial allocations for years.

**Inequity in the availability of potentially effective therapies and vaccines:** A drug used to treat smallpox, Tecovirimat, was approved in the US earlier in 2022 for the treatment of monkeypox. There are three second and third generation smallpox vaccines, a few of which have been approved for use against monkeypox, including most recently MVA-BN, approved in 2019.

– However, the US and some countries in Europe have almost exclusive access to Tecovirimat and smallpox vaccines, while these are hardly available in the endemic countries in Africa.

Way forward

### World

Outbreaks and epidemics are going to be the unfortunate reality of the future. The only way to respond is with more, better and stronger global collaboration.

### India

Improving disease detection and surveillance capabilities is of utmost importance. This includes ramping up RT-PCR testing capacity and making testing more accessible.

An important part in this is **educating healthcare workers** vis-à-vis monkeypox symptoms, testing and treatment.

**Using ring vaccination:** In this, the vaccine is given to contacts of all suspected or confirmed cases. Smallpox vaccines can be used like this until monkeypox vaccines are readily available for all. Smallpox vaccines are highly effective in prevention and if given early even in treatment of monkeypox disease.



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**Utilise India's large vaccine-manufacturing base** for making smallpox and monkeypox vaccines available for all.

Public health emergencies can be better tackled with appropriate communication messages. **Implementing effective risk communication messages** should be made a priority, starting with informing the citizens about how the virus spreads and what they can do to protect themselves.

#### 4. [Secure Indian interests: Ensure fair play in media](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "Secure Indian Interests: Ensure fair play in media" published in the Live Mint on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

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

**Relevance:** Digital media

**News:** Recently, the **union minister of state for Information Technology** indicated to enact a legislation which would make it mandatory for the Big Tech like Google, Meta, Microsoft, Apple, Twitter and Amazon to pay a slice of revenue to Indian news- papers and websites, for using their original content.

**What are the reasons which have compelled the government to move towards this direction?**

In Europe, the **EU's copyright rules 2019** mandates Big Tech like Google News to share part of their revenues with the publishers. This has pushed Germany, Spain, and France to institutes legal regime to make it mandatory for the platform to share revenue with the news publishers.

In addition, to the **European Countries, Australia** had also passed a law to assure its local media a fairer share.

**Other reasons**

In the information age, the **valuable resources** are required to create **Intellectual properties** and such a creation should entail fair rewards.

The market has been distorted due to **power asymmetry**. Indian news publishers work is routinely used by **Big Tech firms** for their own business ends and it involves **unfair split-up of returns**.

There is global demand for efforts in order to restrain the clout of **outsized online news dispensers**.

The Big Tech majors exercise their **market power on digital advertising**. This places Indian media companies at a position of disadvantage. Therefore, there is a demand for **digital governance** as well as a framework which can help **Indian news generators** to undo such a distortion.

The media constitutes an important institution that upholds **core Indian values** and supports national sovereignty.

**Way Forward**

Last year, the **Indian Newspaper Society (INS)** and the **Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA)** took Google to regulators on allegation that it has been abusing its dominant position in laying out terms for **news aggregation**.

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The regulator is already doing a probe in this case. The findings of the case could help in building a robust legal framework.

### 5. Preserving democracy in India

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Preserving democracy in India” published in the “The Hindu” on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

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

**Relevance:** Issues and Challenges in the Parliamentary System of India

**News:** In recent period, the government of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra toppled. Further, there were selective arrests of Opposition leaders. This indicates serious issues in the functioning of the Indian democracy

#### **Basic Concept of a democracy**

A **democratic executive** must satisfy two conditions – (1) It must be a **stable executive** and (2) it must be a **responsible executive**.

It is not possible to ensure a **stable executive** and a **responsible executive** in equal degree in a particular system. Therefore, the constitutional makers have to adopt either of the two features. Former is ensured in the **Presidential System** and later is ensured in the **Parliamentary system**. For Example:

(a) **England Case:** executives are subjected to **daily assessment** by members of Parliament, through questions, resolutions, no-confidence motions, adjournment motions and debates on addresses and they are also subjected to **Periodic assessment** by the electorate at the time of the election.

(b) **The US Executive:** Daily assessment is not available under the American system. There is only periodic assessment.

Therefore, the constituent assembly India adopted the **parliamentary system** because the fathers of the Indian constitution preferred “**more responsibility to more stability**” as per the Indian need.

#### **What are the problems being faced by Indian democracy?**

(1) India has preferred **responsible executives** to **stable executives**. However, there are attempts to weaken the opposition in India, which is not in the interest of parliamentary democracy. A vigilant opposition is important for **daily assessment** of the executive, ensuring a **vibrant democracy** as well as the **very survival of the democracy**.

(2) The Anti-defection law has failed to serve its purpose. It was inserted in the **10th Schedule** through the **52nd Constitutional Amendment Act**. Further, the Supreme Court upheld its constitutional validity long ago.

There are cases when a party member shows **disloyalty** to his party through violation of the whip. They simultaneously decline to **resign** from his/her seat and to fight an **immediate by-election**.

#### **Others Issues**

In the recent past, the draconian provisions of various legislations, especially **the Prevention of Money Laundering Act**, have been invoked by the ruling regime against Opposition members.

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### Way Forward

**Political parties**, the **judiciary** and **civil society** must take steps to ensure that democracy does not fail.

Some **political thinkers'** advocates for the '**theory of recall**,' so that a member whose personal behaviour falls below standards expected of his constituents goes back and seeks the approval of the voters.

### Role of Judiciary

The judiciary must be aware of the **ground realities** and not allow such **politically motivated investigations**. Judges should readily grant **anticipatory bail** or **regular bail** in politically motivated matters.

The Supreme Court can re-write the anti-defection law by invoking powers under Article 142 of the Constitution.

### Political Parties

In a democratic set up, criticism from the opposition parties must be tolerated because it is the essence of democracy.

During the Constituent Assembly debates, Ram Narayan Singh said, "A government which does not like opposition and always wants to be in power is not a patriotic but a traitor government."

At the same time, while Opposition must be **credible** and **strong**. It must work constructively. It can make itself credible and strong by feeling the pulse of the people of India and reforming itself.

### 6. [Lessons on navigating the evolving geopolitics in the Middle East](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article "**Lessons on navigating the evolving geopolitics in the Middle East**" published in **Indian Express** on **19<sup>th</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 2 –International Relations

**Context:** Joe Biden's recent trip to the Middle East highlights some new trends that are reshaping the region. India should consider these new trends and take lessons in its engagement with the region.

#### **What are the new trends that are reshaping the geopolitics of the Middle East?**

**First**, it was a common belief among the liberals now that US will now separate itself from the messy politics of the Middle East. This belief was strengthened by the events like US exit from Afghanistan and expansion of hydrocarbon production in the US or energy independence of US from the Middle East. However, **US has clarified that it "will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia, or Iran"**.

**Second**, US is changing its pattern of engagement with the region. It is **changing its role from the sole provider of regional security to helping its regional partners develop capabilities** to secure themselves. For example, efforts are being made to develop Middle East Air Defence (MEAD) coalition involving the US, Israel, and some of the Arab nations. [I2U2 \(India-Israel-UAE-USA\) Grouping](#) is another example.

**Third**, Biden has **modified the popular belief** that the major contradiction in the world is the "**conflict between democracies and autocracies**." It was necessary as the Middle East, in particular, is a place where ideologies come to die due to existing monarchies and autocracies.

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**Fourth,** Biden's attitude proves that “interests” generally tend to triumph over “values” in the conduct of foreign policy. During his election campaign, Biden vowed to isolate Saudi Arabia (SA) from the rest of the world, due to the killing of Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents. However, amidst the pressing need to cool down the global oil market and ease domestic inflation, Biden had to repair the relations with SA.

**Fifth, Middle East is learning to put national interest above other identities** such as ethnicity and religion. **For example;**

Normalisation of relations with Israel to counter the threat from Iran.

The contradiction between Arabs and Iran has emerged as a major fault line in the region, despite their shared Islamic identity.

Many Gulf kingdoms, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are now consciously promoting a national identity among their peoples. It is being done by celebrating “national days” and creating greater popular awareness of national histories and heritage.

**Sixth, Israel** in the past aligned with non-Arab Muslim states like Iran and Turkey to act against Arabs. However, now it is aligning with Arabs against Iran. **Turkey**, despite shared religious identities, undermined many of the Arab regimes recently. Whereas, **Qatar** is closer to non-Arab Turkey and in opposition to its Gulf Arab neighbors.

Thus, India should consider the complexity of the changing dynamics in the Middle East in framing its foreign policies for the region.

### 7. [The win-win potential of India's partnership with African nations – on African Continental Free Trade Area](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**The win-win potential of India's partnership with African nations**” published in **Live Mint** on **19<sup>th</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 2 –International Relations – Bilateral and Multilateral relation of India

**News:** The [African Continental Free Trade Area \(AfCFTA\)](#) has the potential to create the largest free trade area in the world, by geography.

India and Africa share a long and rich relationship. Our freedom movement became an inspiration for African nationalists in their desire for independence from colonialism. Now African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will strengthen trade and investment relations between India and Africa.

#### **India's present engagement in developmental activities of Africa**

India has already been involved in several developmental projects in Africa via concessional loans, grants, and capacity-building programs. It has played a significant role in Africa's socio-economic development.

India's cumulative investments in Africa stand at \$70 billion.

Lines of Credit (LoCs) worth \$12.26 billion have been extended to African countries.

193 projects have been completed and 66 are under execution. These projects related to oil and gas, mining, banking, pharma, textiles, the automotive sector, and agriculture.

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Skill development and capacity building play a vital role in the empowerment of the youth and women. India has been engaged on this front as well. In 2017, under **Indian Council for Cultural Relations**, almost 50,000 scholarships had been granted to African students over five years. **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation program** is assisting Africa in giving people opportunities to learn new skills and acquire knowledge through training programs.

### **What is the significance of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)?**

**AfCFTA** provides a wide scope to **create the largest free trade area in the world**, by geography, and an opportunity to lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty.

It will **create a single market for goods and services**, thereby enabling a single market for goods and services, easy movement of persons, and promoting industrial development.

India can leverage the new opportunities presented by the AfCFTA. India can facilitate **a digital transformation of Africa** through innovation and the transfer of technology.

*The 17th Confederation of Indian Industry Exim Bank Conclave on the India Africa Growth Partnership has marked the following priority areas to focus on:*

Indian industries could align their efforts with the priority areas set by a free trade agreement. It will promote India-Africa bilateral trade and investment under AfCFTA.

There are **opportunities in services trade** with Africa in the fields of Information Technology (IT), Mobile payment solutions, banking, and financial services.

India's success in manufacturing vaccines and pharmaceuticals, and advances in telemedicine, can open up new opportunities in the pharmaceuticals and the healthcare sector.

India is the world's third-largest startup ecosystem. Thus, it could count on its **strengths to fortify the digital infrastructure of an entire continent**, thereby contributing to the achievement of the continent's Agenda 2063.

The AfCFTA seeks to facilitate international **supply chains for food, pharmaceuticals, and various other essential products**. India can help in building important infrastructure for cross-border supply chains. It will help Indian industries to operate efficiently in Africa.

Women consist of 90% of Africa's labor force in the informal sector, engaged mainly in education, healthcare, and tertiary services. Under the AfCFTA these **women-oriented developmental sectors** will get a boost. India's efforts on this part would enhance its brand image across the continent as its economy emerges.

### 8. [Preparing for the presidency – On Assuming G20 Presidency](#)

**News:** This post is created based on the article **“Preparing for the presidency”** published in **Business Standard** on **19<sup>th</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 2 – Important International Institutions

**News:** India is going to take over the presidency of the Group of 20 (G20) nations from Indonesia in a few months.

India's Group of 20 (G20) presidency comes amidst many challenges. Some challenges are the Russian invasion of Ukraine, inflation induced by consequent Western sanctions, and the effect

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of the pandemic is still prevalent. Furthermore, G20 is more divided due to freezing relations between Russia and Western nations.

However, it is still the only effective grouping. Thus, India needs to fully utilize this opportunity.

### **What are the challenges facing India in setting its G-20 agenda?**

Generally, at this point in time, a president's nation should be well-developed. However, India is still working on this part. Following are some issues:

1. Indian government functions with multiple silos that coordinate only afterward.
2. Just a few months before the summit, the G20 Sherpa role has been assigned to the outgoing chief executive officer of the NITI Aayog, by the Union commerce minister.
3. The finance track of the G20 remains technically the business of the Union finance ministry. Sous-Sherpa has been appointed from within the foreign ministry.
4. The most effective G20 presidencies of the past ensured there was close coordination between the Sherpa and finance tracks.

There are concerns that considering the challenges and too many centers of power and responsibility, India might be over-prepared or under-prepared.

### **What are the different tracks of the G20?**

G20 is divided into two channels, to discuss the various issues, namely the **financial track** and the **Sherpa track**.

**Financial Track** addresses a number of agendas related to the financial sectors and involves Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors from all G20 members.

**The Sherpa Track** addresses other agendas that are outside the financial sector. Sherpas are generally appointed directly by the Head of Government / Country and are seen as their representation at various G20 meetings. He/she is assisted by several sous Sherpas.

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

A coherent and interlinked strategy should be developed by coordination between different ministries, PMO, and new Sherpa.

India should be able to take major agendas to the institution, like reform of the multilateral development banks and principles for digital payment systems. The time is ripe for pushing such reforms. Because, with the next presidency to Brazil, past, present and future G20 presidents will for the first time be from developing nations.

### 9. [Sharing power with the next generations](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article **"Sharing power with the next generations"** published in **The Hindu** on **19th July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

**Relevance:** About the inter-generational justice.

**News:** The recent Ukraine crisis highlighted that the institutions of global governance which were supposed to guarantee peace have failed.

A new concept of **"inter-generational justice"** is gaining traction as a better way of producing a more equitable global order and arresting mankind's breakneck destruction of the planet.

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Why does the standard model of hierarchical organisations fail?

After two world wars, a new breed of global institutions was created to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, rebuild shattered economies, and maintain global peace.

These include the United Nations headquartered in New York and the Bretton Woods institutions — the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) — in Washington.

However, power in these institutions was retained by the victors. This shows new ideas for global governance are required because, **a)** They follow standard “one size” solution, whereas this cannot fit all, **b)** There is also a trust breakdown between the leaders on top of large international organisations and people on the ground,

**c)** They are also ineffective and constantly struck between issues between nations. For instance, after the Bretton Woods institutions failed to prevent oil large “oil shocks”, the world created G7. This was later expanded to G8 and G20. But the G20 is facing issues as the G7 wants to throw Russia out.

**Read more:** [UN Reforms](#)

What is the prevailing scientific theory and its drawbacks?

The modern approach to progress is disseminated widely through “STEM” (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education. This is done by extracting resources from the planet to create new products for human benefit. And then to find new technological approaches to repair the damage caused to the planet by those technologies.

But, the climate is heating up. Inequalities are growing. People are losing their patience. New ways must be found to solve complex global problems.

A **scientific theory cannot work** in socio-ecological systems because, **a)** Unlike machines designed by engineers, social scientists and economists are situated within the systems, **b)** Unlike ‘scientific’ design thinkers who try to design systems ‘objectively’, natural systems thinkers learn to live with and within the systems that give them life. For instance, They do not feel the need for rockets to take them to other planets after they have spoiled this one.

**Read more:** [IBSA grouping issue joint statement calling for UNSC reforms](#)

How to achieve inter-generational justice and lasting peace?

To ensure peace and prosperity, the **power must shift between generations** to create a more equitable global order. In other words, globally, the power must shift from the older, so-called ‘advanced’ countries to younger ‘emerging’ economies.

**1)** All generations and countries must work together. All must listen to others’ aspirations and must understand others’ wisdom. **2)** The world should move away from the so-called ‘white man’s burden’. So, the G7 and the Security Council must invite the rest to find new solutions to global problems. **3)** Native communities’ natural knowledge must be reaped. **4)** Local systems solutions should be cooperatively implemented within their communities by old and young persons together.

These are the way to solve these global systemic problems.

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### 10. [The case for a portable safety net for migrants](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The case for a portable safety net for migrants**” published in the Live Mint on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and issues arising out of their Design and Implementation; GS 3 Inclusive Growth

**Relevance:** Safety Net of Migrants

**News:** The recently released **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2020-21** shows that 20.8% of total male migration in the country was from urban to rural areas in 2020-21.

#### **What is the certainty effect?**

Humans are naturally risk-averse. It means they try to reduce uncertainties in their decisions due to the **certainty effect**.

**The certainty effect** suggests people are less likely to select the outcomes that are merely probable, in comparison to the outcomes that are certain.

During the **first phase of the covid pandemic**, there was a **sudden reverse migration** from urban to rural. It reflects the phenomenon of the **certainty effect**. The migrants were trying to **avoid the risk, i.e. risk-aversion**.

#### **What were the reasons for reverse migration which indicated risk aversion?**

The PLFS lists 16 reasons for migration. Few are

- (1) Around 6.7% of **male migrants** have attributed their migration to the loss of a job, closure of unit or lack of employment opportunities.
- (2) There were other reasons like health-related uncertainty, lockdowns, the temporary closure of shops and establishments, coupled with the absence of a safety net in some instances.

#### **What are the issues in accessing the safety nets for the migrant labourers?**

Although the government policies **create safety nets** for those who need them, when people **migrate**, they often miss out on the **geographically-fixed safety** net benefits.

Some states have safety net provisions, but there are problems with the dissemination of information.

Urban housing for migrants remains a big concern. **For example**, the slums have mushroomed in tier 1 and tier 2 cities.

The **Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act 1979** mandates the **registration** of inter-state migrants. As per the act, the **contractor** has the duties and obligations to register the migrant labor. But the states have not enforced the act.

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

States should work with the Centre to reduce uncertainties for migrant workers.

- (1) The **Economic Survey of 2020-21** came up with a **bare necessities index**. The **Ministry of Statistics** could rely on this index to define a safety net in its computations. The Union government has initiated the process of making access to **bare necessities portable**. This has several benefits.



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(2) The government has launched **One Nation, One Ration Card** and **Ayushman Bharat** schemes to ensure uniform access to food and healthcare across India. Further, the Union government has introduced affordable rental housing complexes, a sub-scheme under the urban Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

(3) Before **policy intervention** for migrants, the government should identify who the **migrants** are. The **Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act 1979** should be implemented to register the inter-state migrants.

### 11. [Fresh urgency on pension reforms](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Fresh urgency on pension reforms” published in the Times of India on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

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

**Relevance:** New Pension Scheme

**News:** In recent periods, various state governments have proposed to shift away from the **National pensions Scheme (NPS)** to the old pension scheme. They are undoing the reform achieved in the past two decades. However, the Union government has been absolutely steadfast in its support for the NPS.

#### **Evolution of the Pensions System in India**

**Phase-Before the launch of NPS:** The Indian pension system covered **three categories of people**.

(1) **Government employees** who received them under the traditional pay-as-you-go **defined benefit (DB) system**. It was applicable to those recruited up until 2003. In this scheme, the Governments have to pay full pension to individuals.

(2) **Destitute persons** were eligible under the National Old Age Pension Scheme, and

(3) The **organised sector workers** were covered under the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation’s pension scheme.

#### **Criticism of the Defined Benefits (DB) Pension Scheme**

The pension bill of the Union government increased from 0.24% of GDP in 1980-81 to 0.73% of GDP in 1999-2000.

The pension bill of the Government of India consumed 8% of the **revenue receipts** in the year 1999-2000 as against 2.9 percent in 1980-81.

In 1998, a committee was established under Surendra Dave to build a new pension system. This was called as the **Old Age Social and Income Security (OASIS) Project**.

#### **Phase of New Pensions Scheme (NPS)**

Project OASIS helped create and socialise new knowledge on the failure of **DB systems** worldwide. It proposed newer **defined contribution (DC) systems** that had been rolled out in many countries at that time.

Therefore, in February 2002, the union government announced the creation of a **DC pension system**. Subsequently, **Himachal Pradesh** became the first state to join NPS in 2003. Later on, other states also joined the scheme.

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### About the Direct Contribution (DC) Pensions Plan or NPS

It is a pension scheme for **new recruits** to the civil services and the uncovered segment of the population, who were recruited starting from 2004.

The **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority of India (PFRDA)** was also created.

#### **Arguments in favor of the NPS**

The NPS has been able to drive fiscal **down costs**. It has become the **cheapest fund management system** in India.

In the NPS reform, the government evolves from double payment to only paying contributions for the employee. Further, the young are de-risked from fiscal concerns.

The importance of the NPS will be realized when the persons receiving the **DB pension** at present would fade away.

The NPS was formulated based on **intellectual** and **evidence-based consensus**, public debate and discussion, and good usage of external domain expertise.

At present, India is undergoing an accelerated **demographic transition**. As per recent data, the share of the youth (aged 15-29) in India has dropped to 26.7% in 2021 in the last decade. Further, it is projected to go down to 22.6% by 2036. Therefore, there is a stronger need for the NPS reform.

#### **What are the causes of the state government's proposal for the revival of the old pension scheme?**

- (1) It may be a **populist consideration**, as there is a demand from a section of employees.
- (2) The decision may be partly to allay **immediate fiscal pressures** because, in NPS, the government has to contribute its share of NPS.

### 12. Unsayable in the House – On issue of unparliamentary words

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Unsayable in the house” published in the Indian Express on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

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

**Relevance:** Parliamentary Discussion

**News: Recently**, there has been controversy surrounding the release of a Lok Sabha publication which contains a list of unparliamentary words.

#### **About the Parliamentary rules for unparliamentary words in India**

Parliamentary rules specify that **presiding officers** can delete words from the day's proceedings that they consider **defamatory, indecent, unparliamentary, or undignified** in the parliament. Therefore, the presiding officers of Parliament have the **final authority** on what gets recorded in the day's proceedings.

Members of Parliament (MPs) can also draw attention to any **unparliamentary words** and urge the chair to delete them.

Further, Parliament television also edits **its video recording** of the debate to reflect the **deletion**.

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Any reporting of the parliamentary discussion that includes the **deleted portion** is a breach of **parliamentary privilege** and **invites the ire of the House**.

Deleted words are then added by the parliament secretariat to its compilation of unparliamentary expressions.

### **Origin of the exercise of deleting unparliamentary words**

This exercise started in **parliamentary functioning** in England. The Speaker of the House of Commons started removing the offending words from the written proceedings of the house.

In 1873, the **constitutional theorist Erskine May** started recording words and expressions that the Speaker considered **unparliamentary** in an **eponymous guide** to parliamentary procedure.

Further, later editions of this book laid down the **principle of parliamentary language**. It states, “good temper and moderation are the characteristics of parliamentary language.”

In 1983, the **Speaker of the House of Commons** held that “whether a word should be regarded as **unparliamentary** depends on the context in which it is used. The context is critical and all-important. Here, “**Context**” means how the word is said, the circumstances in which it is said, and when it is said.

### **History of application of this rule**

(1) In 1956, a Lok Sabha MP referred to **Mahatma Gandhi’s assassin Nathuram Godse** during the debate on a bill. The presiding officer deleted the name from **the day’s written record**, and the **parliament secretariat** added the word to its compilation of **unparliamentary expressions**.

(2) **In 2014, Hemant Tukaram Godse** was elected as the Lok Sabha Member of Parliament (MP). His surname was considered unparliamentary. Therefore, the presiding officer of Rajya Sabha deleted the word “Godse” from the House proceedings.

(3) **In 2020**, the Chairman of Rajya Sabha deleted the words used by the Prime Minister while replying to the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President’s address, from the day’s proceedings.

### **What are the issues around deletion of unparliamentary words in a Lok Sabha publication?**

*First*, Even if Parliament edits its record, the unparliamentary expression will be available online as a ready reference for using such words. In such a scenario, such a compilation of the words classified as unparliamentary will not deter a Member of Parliament from using them on the floor of the House.

*Second*, in a political discussion, a restriction of unparliamentary expression, without considering context, will unnecessarily stifle the voices of MPs.

### [13. A new legislation that mirrors the old – On Drugs regulations in India](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**A new legislation that mirrors the old**” published in **The Hindu** on **20<sup>th</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 2 – Social Issues – Issues related to health

**News:** The Union Health Ministry recently published a new draft Bill to replace the antiquated Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. However, the bill seems to lack the provisions that can address the burning issues in the sector.

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The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 was introduced, when the drug industry was in its infancy, now it is antiquated. It was based on the following procedure:

1) Drug inspectors purchasing manufactured drugs from an open market > 2) if a drug fails quality testing, the manufacturer will be punished.

### **What is the need for changing the regulations in drug industry?**

#### **Absence of provision of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs)**

1) The present system is based on luck, if on a certain day, a good quality product fails a test, the manufacturer will be punished or vice versa.

2) Much of the world has shifted to a more rigorous system of regulation centred on the compliance of manufacturing units with good manufacturing practices (GMPs). A drug manufactured in compliance with GMPs is unlikely to fail tests in the market due to the quality checks it goes through.

3) In the U.S., the law presumes that any drug that is manufactured in a facility and fails to comply with GMPs is 'adulterated'. U.S. law mandates drug inspectors to publish reports of inspection.

Whereas, in 1988, India incorporated a system of GMPs via government rules, instead of Parliament, with no criminal penalties for companies failing to comply with GMPs. Even, drug inspectors are not liable to publish their reports. Many evidences prove that such inspections are not carried out.

#### **Regulatory Structure**

India has 37 agencies for enforcing drug regulation, including one in each State and Union Territory, Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) at the center.

- **State drug controllers** license drug manufacturing and conduct enforcement actions such as sampling, testing, and prosecution for substandard drugs.
- **CDSCO** regulates imports and decides if new drugs have adequate clinical evidence before they can be sold.
- **Health ministry** lays down rules and regulations and bans drugs with no supporting clinical evidence.

Now, the issue arises, when the states like Himachal Pradesh (HP), do not enforce the Drugs and Cosmetics Act properly. HP accounts for the bulk of pharmaceutical manufacturing on account of a tax holiday. They fear, it will stop the investments by the pharmaceutical industry.

The problem increases, as the drugs from states like Himachal Pradesh are sold across the country, even in the states with more competent drug regulators.

#### **Regulatory bodies**

Drug regulations give discretionary power to the unelected bureaucrats for approving a new drug or a new manufacturing facility. However, the process is not transparent.

#### **What are the issues with the new draft bill?**

Even the new bill does not provide for the provisions of GMP.

The bill does not address the need for a single regulator.

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The new law doesn't address the critical issue of transparency.

The proposed legislation does not make accommodations for public participation.

### What should be done?

**Mashelkar Committee** in 2003 had recommended centralizing drug licensing with the central regulator.

The law should **guarantee proactive disclosure** of all crucial documentation related to regulatory decisions on the approval or rejection of drugs. If a new drug is being approved, the regulator should be required to disclose all the data, including clinical trial data.

Each inspection for GMP compliance should conclude with an **inspection report accessible** to the general public.

**Public participation** in the regulatory process should be made legal by allowing public hearings or citizen petitions to question regulators and explain their rationale for approving the new drug.

### 14. [No inner-party democracy](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article **"No inner-party democracy"** published in **The Hindu** on **20th July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.

**Relevance:** Inner-party democracy in India and the UK.

**News:** Recently, the British Conservative Party ousted their leader Boris Johnson. The incident showcases the amount of power ordinary MPs have over the Prime Minister. But this inner-party democracy is absent in India.

What is the position of PM in India?

In India, the Prime Minister **exercises absolute authority** over party MPs. MPs' ability to even diverge slightly from the official government line on routine policy matters is almost non-existent.

The Prime Minister's power is **strengthened by the anti-defection law**. Under it, recalcitrant MPs who do not manage to carry two-thirds of their colleagues with them can always be disqualified.

**MPs do not enjoy any autonomy** at all to question and challenge their party leadership.

**Read more:** [Problems associated with Anti Defection Law](#)

How MPs in the UK are different from MPs in India?

**Firstly**, MPs in the U.K. are able to act boldly because they do not owe their nomination to the party leader, but are selected by the local constituency party. In India, however, it is the party leadership that decides candidates, with an informal consultation with the local party.

**Secondly**, MPs in the U.K. does not face a risk of disqualification if they speak out against the leader.

These factors are the biggest stumbling blocks toward ensuring inner-party democracy in India.

**Read more:** [Explained: How are Rajya Sabha MPs elected?](#)

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What should be done to ensure inner-party democracy?

**Borrow the model from the UK:** Individual Conservative MPs write to the 1922 Committee (which comprises backbench MPs, and looks out for their interests) expressing that they have “no confidence” in their leader.

If a numerical or percentage threshold (15% of the party’s MPs in the U.K.) is breached, an automatic leadership vote is triggered. In this, the party leader is forced to seek a fresh mandate from the parliamentary party.

**Empower MPs:** India should consider empowering its elected representatives, to ensure accountability for party leadership. For this, an exception has to be made to the anti-defection law.

In the long run, the Westminster model dictates that control over candidates must shift from central party leaders to local party members.

**Read more:** [The issues faced by MPs in India in initiating reforms on their own](#)

### 15. [Chile marks a notch in global constitutionalism](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Chile marks a notch in global constitutionalism**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.

**Relevance:** About the draft Chilean constitution.

**News:** In 2019, Chilean protests revolve around themes such as social inequality, the cost of living, and probity in governance. One of the demands of the Chilean protesters was to replace Pinochet’s Constitution with a democratic Constitution, written by the People of Chile

What are the issues with Chile’s constitution?

Chile’s constitution was drafted in 1980, under the military regime. The Constitution embodied what is popularly known as Chicago School economics. These include **a)** Market deregulation was encoded into the Constitution, **b)** Privatisation of water as a constitutional imperative. Over the years, this led to Chile becoming one of the most unequal countries in the world.

What are the various models of the Constitution?

#### **United States model**

In the early to mid-20th century, constitutional drafting around the world often followed the United States model. It was believed that the purpose of a Constitution was to constrain state power. Constitutions set out enforceable bills of rights, and divided power between the three wings of State — the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.

But the US Model tends to ignore the “social question”, and issues around equitable access to material resources.

#### **Later models**

**Firstly**, after 1980s, Constitutions began to **include “socio-economic rights”** — such as the rights to housing, to education, and to health, among others — within their bills of rights. For example, South Africa’s post-apartheid Constitution of 1996.

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**Secondly**, the constitution **recognises the complexities of governance** and establishes a **set of institutions that are independent** of the legislature and the executive. These are sometimes referred to as “integrity institutions”.

These include information commissions, human rights commissions, and electoral commissions. For example, Chapter Fifteen of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya lists out 10 commissions and guarantees their independence from the government.

**Thirdly**, the constitution also **recognises active public participation**. For instance, the 2010 Constitution of Kenya mandates public participation in the process of law-making, and also envisions popular initiatives as one way of bringing about constitutional change.

**Read more:** [Shouldn't regulators have constitutional status?](#)

What are the salient features of the draft Chilean constitution?

The Chilean government eventually conceded to protesters' demand. This led to the formation of a directly-elected Constituent Assembly. The constitutional draft was finalised at the beginning of July and will be put to a nationwide referendum in September.

The Chilean government include all three post 80's constitutional features. Apart from that, the constitution is also a future-facing document. For example, the Constitution recognises the role of technology and guaranteed the right to digital connectivity.

The draft Constitution acknowledges the gravity of the climate crisis, and constitutionalises important principles of international environmental law, such as inter-generational equity.

If approved through the referendum, then it will be hailed as a historic triumph in the annals of global constitutionalism.

**Read more:** [Drafting a new Constitution is impossible](#)

### [16. SC view on deciding minority community status on state-wise basis solves one problem and creates others](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “SC view on deciding minority community status on state-wise basis solves one problem and creates others” published in **The Times of India** on **20<sup>th</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 2 – India Constitution

**Context:** Supreme Court in its recent observation stated that it is a settled position in law that religious and linguistic minority status is to be decided state-wise. This position settles one issue and raise another.

Under the National Minorities Commission Act, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Buddhists, and Jains have been notified nationally as minority communities.

However, in some states, the listed minorities are the majority. Also, in almost every state, there can be a linguistic minority.

The significance of minority status lies in the fact that it allows significant autonomy to administer the education institutions to minorities.

**What are the issues in empowering states to decide the minority status?**

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**First**, there are state-wise differences in minority status, like the reservation policy. Every community in the central OBC list is not classified likewise in states.

**Second**, if minority status is a state decision, would a minority in the central list will lose its minority tag, if it is in majority in a state? Like Sikhs in Punjab or Christians in Mizoram. It will be a big question.

**Third**, it won't help in rising in human capital that creates skills for the job market needs. It is because India is witnessing immense competition for scarce education and employment opportunities. Thus, labeling communities as backward or minority has become a political decision.

### What should be done?

There are a few reasons behind the demand for minority status tags by educational institutions, like, 1) Overregulation by the regulators like UGC (University Grant Commission), and 2) Excessive demands of laws like the RTE (Right to Education) act. Thus, there should be a focus on providing quality education for all instead of regulating the institutions.

### 17. [The trade policy India needs](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "The trade policy India needs" published in the Live Mint on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Government policies for various sectors

**Relevance:** New Trade Policy

**News:** The ministry of commerce is working on a **new trade policy**. In this context, Professor **Amita Batra** has published a book, **India's Trade Policy** in the 21st century, which has important messages for policy.

#### Role of Global Value Chains (GVCs)

Now, a **successful export strategy** doesn't involve producing a product made largely in one country for export. Instead, it is based on the **global value chains (GVCs)** which have driven the growth of trade.

Now, the multiple components of a typical export product are produced by different companies, based on the competitiveness of that location in producing that particular component. Thereafter, components are shipped to other locations for further value addition. The final product is ultimately **assembled** somewhere else for final shipment to centers of consumption.

The **backward integration** with GVCs is an important indicator of integration with global supply chains.

**For example**, the iPhone has 178 components that are sourced from 200 different suppliers across 26 countries!

#### The benefit of the Global Value Chains (GVCs)

The share of developed countries in the export of manufactured goods has reduced as they **offshore** the production process. And the share of developing countries has increased which had the necessary **human skills** and **physical infrastructure** to enter the value chain.



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### Which developing countries benefitted from the GVCs?

**India:** India's share in world exports of goods had been declining before the 1991 reforms. It reached to 0.5% in 1990. However, India benefited from GVCs since the 1991 reforms. It improved in the post-reforms period to touch 0.7% in 2000 and 1.8% in 2021.

**China:** China drew the most benefit. Its share increased from 3.9% in 2000 to 15% in 2021. It shaped its trade policy to take advantage of the GVC phenomenon.

Therefore, the Prime Minister of India has now set an **ambitious objective**: integrating the country with global supply chains and indeed even making it a hub.

### Some reforms are required while designing the new trade policy of India

One of India's trade policy weaknesses is the increase in import tariffs implemented over the last four years. There is a need to **lower tariff levels** to integrate with global value chains. For example, **customs duties** can be reduced to levels that are prevailing in East Asia.

**Second**, India's **bound tariffs** are much higher than applied tariffs.

**Third**, India should integrate as closely as possible with East and South East Asia. Because the countries in these areas have the greatest potential for expanding trade and hosting GVCs.

**Fourth**, India's decision to opt-out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), was a missed opportunity. However, the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) agreement** which we have joined offers a new opportunity for integration with GVC. The Indian government should work to push the IPEF towards a trade agreement.

**Fifth**, India has traditionally opposed '**extraneous issues**' in trade agreements like labour, the environment, intellectual property rights (IPR), and even investment protection. However, such issues are bound to become part of future **trade agreements**. Therefore, India should be open to them in order to attract investments for greater integration with GVCs.

**Sixth**, India should not hold itself back from joining **the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Transpacific Partnership**. Other developing countries are willing to join such agreements because China has already applied to join them. It includes many provisions for deeper integration.

**Seventh**, India should remain open to **digital trade, e-commerce, and digital payments** as these are **new areas for global integration** in the years ahead. India has substantial strengths in this area.

**Eighth**, trade policy needs to be supported by **other policies** which are outside the realm of the commerce ministry. For example, the **production-linked incentives (PLI) scheme** is a new initiative in building a competitive domestic industry.

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### 18. [Indian MNCs are absent from discussions on digital policy](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Indian MNCs are absent from discussion on digital policy” published in the Indian Express on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

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

**Relevance:** Digital Economy related policies

**News:** In 2022, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has announced the **draft amendment to the IT Rules 2021, the draft India Data Accessibility and Use Policy, National Data Governance Framework Policy and the new cyber security directions**. All these proposals have been put out for consultation. In addition to these, the government is also likely to announce the **e-commerce policy and the Data Protection Bill** soon.

#### Issues

There are those who say that India’s digital economy has been operating in a regulatory vacuum.

#### What are the causes behind the MEITY moves?

There has been accelerated growth of the digital ecosystem, which needs regulatory nurturing.

There has been an enormous backlash against the growing power and influence of internet giants. They do bring benefits to consumers, businesses and governments, but then they also enjoy dominant positions, engender misinformation and at the extreme, undermine democratic processes.

These platforms have developed other ways to influence the government. For example, they have upped their advocacy by **hiring qualified professionals and funding empirical research**, not only in India but also across the world.

#### Other issues

First of all, the **government** does not always **consult businesses** before announcing a new policy or regulation. But, the government has recently **invited stakeholders** to an open house discussion on the **proposed changes** to the IT Rules. But there are problems in this ongoing process:

(1) The **Big Giants** like Google, Amazon, Facebook, Twitter etc. are all **actively engaged** in policy discussions, either directly or through third parties to put forth a point of view. Further, start-ups, **think tanks, civil society organisations** and **academics** invested in the issues of the digital economy either as **users** or as **observers** have also been contributing in the process of policy discourse.

(2) **Indian origin multinational corporations** — the Tatas, Reliance, Aditya Birla Group, Godrej, ITC, Bajaj, and Hero, who have collectively contributed to the country’s development are missing in the discussion.

(3) Many of these Indian MNCs are working towards **adopting digital technologies** for manufacturing, distribution, and client service. **For example**, many companies now have online distribution channels. Like The Tatas have entered into e-commerce, first with **Tata Cliq** and recently with **Neu**.

(4) Over the last few years there has been an **overwhelming presence of the Big Tech Indian start-ups** competing in this space on the active debate on critical digital policies including those

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on data governance, privacy, anti-trust, and intermediary liability. However, **Indian MNCs** have been mostly absent.

### The Way Forward

Government relations and **outreach functions** have always been important to big businesses. **For example**, the government listened to the plea of **the Bombay Club** which resisted 1991 economic reforms.

The practice of **multi-stakeholderism in policy formulation** must also be adhered to in the digital economy sector.

The government should work to create an **enabling, secure and trusted digital ecosystem in India**.

### 19. [India-Vietnam ties, from strong to stronger](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article **“India-Vietnam ties, from strong to stronger”** published in **The Hindu** on **21<sup>st</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 2 – International Relations

**Context:** The article analyses various dimensions of India-Vietnam relations.

India’s external trade (over 90% by volume and 70% by value) is by sea, thus oceans are the key to India’s future. Thus, India has intensified its efforts to engage with maritime neighbors, including Vietnam.

With the following developments, the scale of the India-Vietnam strategic and defense cooperation was enhanced:

1. Formal declaration of a strategic partnership made in 2007.
2. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, 2016,
3. Signing of ‘Joint Vision for Defence Cooperation and
4. A memorandum of understanding on mutual logistics support
5. India granted the U.S. \$100 million Defence Line of Credit to Vietnam and announced finalization of another U.S. \$500 million Defence Line of Credit.
6. India has also agreed to expand military training and assist the Vietnam Navy’s strike capabilities.
7. India’s Defence Minister handed over 12 high-speed boats, a Khukri-class corvette, to Vietnam recently’.

### Other areas of cooperation between India and Vietnam

1) Maritime security dialogue, 2) naval exercises, 3) Coast Guard cooperation, and training and capacity building, and 4) cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Furthermore, both countries are synergizing their efforts to work in bilateral and other sub-regional and multilateral frameworks, such as IORA, BIMSTEC, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, etc.

Both countries are also looking at collaboration around the seven pillars of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

### Significance of India-Vietnam relationship

As India pursues its **‘Act East Policy’**, Vietnam has become a valuable partner in India’s political and security engagements in the Indo-Pacific region.

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Both countries share some **strategic concerns** like energy security and open and secure sea lines of communication.

India's is broadening its **economic and strategic interests** in the region, while Vietnam's desire for strategic autonomy. Both will be benefitted by the strong relationship.

Vietnam is of great strategic importance because its **position enables it to control 'the South China Sea** — a true Mediterranean of the Pacific'.

### **What are the driving factors behind India's growing maritime engagement with Vietnam?**

- 1) To counter an **assertive China** by strengthening Vietnam's military power.
- 2) Recognising **geostrategic and geo-economic importance** of sea lines of communication beyond its geographical proximity like the South China Sea. It is important as almost 55% of India's trade with the Indo-Pacific region passes through the South China Sea.
- 3) To track potential developments in the **maritime domain** that could affect its national interests
- 4) Importance of a **forward maritime presence and naval partnership** to deter potential adversaries, has been recognised by the Indian Navy.

### **What are the potential areas of cooperation?**

- 1) Meaningful academic and cultural collaborations, 2) blue economy, 3) marine habitat conservation, 4) advance collaboration between maritime security agencies.

Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) presents immense opportunities for India-Vietnam relations. It will be helpful in addressing common challenges and strengthening India- Vietnam relationship.

## 20. [Revamp India's school health services](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article "**Revamp India's school health services**" published in **The Hindu** on **21<sup>st</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 2 – Issues related to education

**Context:** After the return of normalization post-pandemic, on the education front, there has been some discourse on 'learning recovery'. However, the health needs of schoolchildren are not getting due attention yet. There is a need for improved school health services.

### **Government initiatives and past efforts toward School Health Services (SHS)**

The first documented record of school health services in India is from 1909. Then presidency of Baroda began the medical examination of schoolchildren.

In its 1946 report, Sir Joseph Bhore committee observed that school health services in India were practically non-existent.

In 1953, the secondary education committee recommended comprehensive policy interventions dealing with school health and school feeding programs.

However, most of the interventions focused on nutrition instead of comprehensive school health.

In March 2022, the government of Delhi began 20 school health clinics, with the following significance. 1) The initiative recognized the importance of school health services. 2) It was based

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on the multi-stakeholder partnership, i.e. funded through a corporate social responsibility fund and run with collaboration between health and education departments.

This Delhi initiative also suffered from the same issue, i.e. lack of knowledge on what makes comprehensive school health services.

### **What are the constituents of comprehensive School Health Services (SHS)?**

Health-care needs are often equated with medical care needs.

Although school children have limited medical care needs, there are many required health needs. Such as unhealthy dietary habits, irregular sleep, lack of physical activity, mental, dental, and eye problems, sexual behavior, the use of tobacco and other substances, addiction, etc.

The health knowledge acquired, and lifestyle adopted at the school-going age stays in adulthood. They lay the foundations of healthy behavior for the rest of their life. **For example**, scientific evidence shows that tobacco cessation efforts are far more successful if started in school.

**FRESH Framework:** UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank have published an inter-agency framework called **FRESH** — an acronym for Focusing Resources on Effective School Health. It proposes four core areas and three supporting strategies:

The **core areas** include; 1) focus on school health policies, i.e., water, sanitation, and the environment 2) skills-based health education 3) school-based health 4) school-based nutrition.

The **supporting strategies** include; 1) effective partnerships between the education and health sectors, 2) community partnership and 3) student participation.

**Guidelines by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, U.S:** School health services should focus on four main areas; 1) Acute and emergency care 2) family engagement 3) chronic disease management 4) care coordination

**WHO guidelines:** SHS should be designed based on local need assessment, with components; 1) health promotion, 2) health education, 3) screening leading to care and/or referral and support as appropriate.

### **What India should do?**

**First**, states should draw up a road map to revamp and strengthen school health services, with a timeline and dedicated budgetary allocation.

**Second**, build upon the existing school health infrastructure. Health talks should be a part of teaching. Adolescent sexual health such as menstrual hygiene, etc. should be integrated into regular classroom teaching.

**Third**, school health clinics should be supplemented with online consultations for physical and mental health needs.

**Fourth**, the role and the participation of parents, especially through parent-teacher meetings, should be increased.

**Fifth**, Government's school health services initiatives should take care of both private schools and government-run schools.

**Sixth**, the School Health initiative under the Ayushman Bharat program must be revamped.

**Seventh**, elected representatives, professionals, pediatricians, and all other influential stakeholders should raise the issue and work towards improved school health services.

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**Lastly**, a convergence of the National Health Policy, 2017 and National Education Policy, 2020 may result in the provision of comprehensive school health services in every Indian State.

### 21. [What is India's law on abortion?](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article **“What is India’s law on abortion”** published in **Indian Express** on **21<sup>st</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 2 – Women and related issues

**News:** A woman has moved to the Supreme Court after her plea was declined in the High Court. The plea has challenged Rule 3B of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Rules, 2003.

The woman is seeking permission for termination of a pregnancy of 23 weeks and 5 days.

#### **Delhi High Court’s Decision**

Delhi HC denied permission to terminate the pregnancy. In oral observations, HC asked the woman to carry her pregnancy to term and to give up the newborn for adoption.

#### **What is India’s law on abortion?**

Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, criminalizes voluntarily “causing miscarriage”. It is an offense, even with the pregnant woman’s consent. However, it is allowed when the miscarriage is caused to save the woman’s life.

Medical **Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP Act)** was introduced in 1971 and amended in 2021. After 2021 amendment, few changes were made. 1) For terminating pregnancy up to 20 weeks, the opinion of one doctor was required. 2) For terminating pregnancies between 20 and 24 weeks, the opinion of two doctors was required.

However, under the 2<sup>nd</sup> category, certain categories of women could seek termination of pregnancy, such as survivors of sexual assault or rape or incest, minor, widowhood, and divorce during pregnancy, mentally ill women, foetal malformation, etc.

#### **What is the intent behind MTP act?**

MTP is not a legislation, focused on women and their reproductive rights. Instead, it is a law that sets limits for medical practitioners that cannot be breached while performing abortions.

The law transfers the decision-making power from the pregnant woman to the RMP. Thus, it seeks to shield medical practitioners from criminal liability.

### 22. [Saving mothers – Data on MMR should lead to restructuring health-care systems for women](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“Saving mothers – Data on MMR should lead to restructuring health-care systems for women”** published in **The Hindu** on **21st July 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** Maternal Mortality Ratio.

**News:** A recent study published in the peer-reviewed journal, PLOS Global Public Health, casts a shadow on the progress of health care targeting women in the country. Further, it also questions the reliability of the country’s own periodic estimates of [maternal mortality ratio, or MMR](#).

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**Note:** MMR denotes the number of mothers who die from complications in pregnancy for every one lakh live births.

What are the key findings of the study?

Researchers from the International Institute for Population Sciences triangulated data from routine records of maternal deaths under the Health Management Information System, with Census data and the Sample Registration System (SRS) to provide the MMR for all States and districts of India.

-The analysis suggests that **70% of districts** (448 out of 640 districts) in India have **reported MMR above 70 deaths**.

-Many of the districts in **southern India and Maharashtra** have an MMR of less than 70.

-The **north-eastern and central regions** have the least number of districts (12 and six districts, respectively) with an MMR less than 70.

**Note:** MMR of 70 is a target under the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

**Read more:** [Maternal Mortality Ratio of India declines by 10 points](#)

What is the significance of the study?

**a)** The analysis demonstrates the presence of huge within-State inequalities, even among the better performers — Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana, **b)** According to the SRS (2016-18), only Assam (215) has an MMR of more than 200. But this district-level assessment indicates that about 130 districts have reported above 200 MMR, **c)** The high MMR also indicates the inadequacy of responsiveness of health systems in India.

**Read more:** [May all mothers live: on Maternal Mortality rate](#)

How to reduce MMR in India?

There is adequate proof that focusing on the following things will help to reduce MMR. These include, **a)** Improvements in access to contraceptives, **b)** Focus on antenatal care, post-delivery health care, body mass index, **c)** Economic status, **d)** A concerted reduction of higher-order births, births in higher ages.

Hence, India should improve overall care for women, and keep real-time track of crucial health data. These urgent and intense actions can reduce MMR and help India to control eminently preventable deaths.

**Must read:** [Maternal Mortality Ratio in India: Status, Challenges and Way Forward – Explained, pointwise](#)

### 23. [A friendlier tax regime can hold back an exodus](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “A friendlier tax regime can hold back an exodus” published in the Live Mint on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 International Relations; Indian Diaspora

**Relevance:** Indian Citizenship

**News:** This week, the government has placed the latest data in Parliament, which shows a rising number of people giving up Indian citizenship.

In 2021, over **163,000 Indians** chose to become citizens of other countries. This is the highest in **seven years**.

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### About the laws of Indian citizenship

Last year, half of those who left Indian citizenship, took **US citizenship**.

Last year's tally of Indians who opted to be citizens of Australia stood at 23,533, Canada at 21,597, the UK at 14,637, Italy at 5,986, New Zealand at 2,643, and Singapore at 2,516.

Apart from small tax havens, this list features Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, and Portugal,

### What were the reasons for choosing citizenship in these countries?

Some of the above-said countries offer **easy entry with a citizenship option** if one brings along a modest amount of money to invest there.

On international surveys of '**passport power**', India still ranks much too low for comfort. The Indian passport is weak to let us get into richer countries. The scroll of nations that grant us either **visa-free** or **swift entry** also remains too short. Therefore, some switchover chose those countries, whose passports enable **smoother global travel**.

Some of the **well-off residents** chose to move abroad due to the high **taxation regime in India**. For example, after counting **surcharges** on the rich, the taxation regime on the rich class has entered a zone that's closer to '**half my earnings**' than '**one-third**'. Thus, taxpayers are feeling **over-squeezed** if not extorted.

For some years now, the Centre has adopted a tendency to harden taxes. For, case of wealth tax.

Another big barrier in front of the **well-off class** has been our curbs on **capital transfers overseas**. In India, up to \$250,000/year can be remitted legally.

### What should be done?

The Indian government can **reduce outbound motivations** to contain the possibility of emigration turning into an exodus in following ways:

- (1) **Lighter taxation** should top the list of **retention measures**. This trend could be weakened if **our top-bracket tax burden** were eased.
- (2) Diplomatic efforts can be made to make it easy for Indian passport holders to go to a greater number of countries.

### 24. ['Advantage New Delhi' in Sri Lanka's India lifeline](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**'Advantage New Delhi' in Sri Lanka's India lifeline**" published in **The Hindu** on **22nd July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – India and its neighbourhood- relations.

**Relevance:** India-Sri Lanka relations.

**News:** The situation in Sri Lanka gives India an opportunity to take the lead in the foreign aid game in its neighbourhood.

What are the Economic challenges faced by Sri Lanka?

This is Sri Lanka's worst economic crisis since its independence in 1948. **a)** The Sri Lankan economy is experiencing stagflation after the debt default and a shortage of dollars, **b)** Inflation



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has spiralled to over 50%, translating into higher food and fuel prices, **c)** Sri Lanka is also facing challenges in getting foreign aid.

At this level, the economy could contract by at least 6% in 2022. Sri Lanka would require financing that falls between \$20 billion to \$25 billion over the next three years to ensure essential imports of food, medicine and fuel for its people and help in stabilising the economy.

**Read more: [What led to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka? Highlight the lessons that can be taken from this crisis.](#)**

How did India help Sri Lanka to avert its economic challenges?

India was the **first responder to Sri Lanka's calls for foreign aid** to help tackle its crippling debt and economic crisis. In the first six months of 2022, Indian aid worth \$3.8 billion has flowed to Sri Lanka through loans, swaps and grants. This is India's largest bilateral aid programme in recent times.

Why does India need to help Sri Lanka to manage its economic challenges?

There are questions by some that why taxpayers should be used to bail out another country's failed economy. But this is wrong because

**a)** Stabilising Sri Lanka's economy could prove to be a major win for India's 'neighbourhood-first' policy, **b)** Once the Sri Lankan economy stabilises, India can deepen its trade and investment linkages with Sri Lanka. This can exceed the current humanitarian aid relationship, **c)** Stable Sri Lanka could spur regional integration and prosperity and **d)** Unstable Sri Lanka also poses security risks to India and lead to a flood of refugees across the Palk Strait.

**Read more: [In Sri Lankan crisis, a window of economic opportunity](#)**

How China's dilemma to help Sri Lanka will help India?

**1)** China has emerged as a major partner for Sri Lanka, especially for infrastructure projects. However, many of them are under scrutiny for their 'debt trap' narrative, **2)** China worries that unilaterally restructuring Sri Lanka's debt would set a new precedent in its lending practices. This might facilitate similarly distressed countries seeking debt relief from China, and **3)** China being a G2 economy and wanting to challenge the U.S., does not want its reputation to be spoiled by bailing out a floundering economy.

All this provides an opportunity for India to upscale its aid and cement its first mover advantage over China.

What does Sri Lanka need to do to overcome the economic challenges?

**a)** Quickly concluding talks on an IMF programme which will increase taxes and utility prices to raise revenue and increase interest rates to control inflation while preserving social welfare expenditures to protect the poor, **b)** Implement structural reforms to make the economy more open to trade and investment and allow market forces to determine resource allocation, **c)** Restore the rule of law and enforce strong anti-corruption policies, **d)** Reset foreign policy towards a more neutral direction and away from the pro-China stance.

**Read more: [Not just dollars: Sri Lanka needs deep economic reforms to dig its way out of the crisis](#)**

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25. [PM's 'revdi' remark: We need to disentangle good subsidies from bad](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“PM's 'revdi' remark: We need to disentangle good subsidies from bad”** published in the **Indian Express** on **22nd July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

**Relevance:** India's subsidy burden.

**News:** Recently, the Prime Minister has called for an end to this free “revdi” (freebies) culture. This shows curbing freebies may now be a policy priority.

What are various types of subsidies?

Technically, a subsidy is the unrecovered cost of any service (or good) provided by the government. The deficit between the receipts and expenditure of a government department in providing a service is the unrecovered cost of providing that service. This is a subsidy.

Freebies mean different things to different people. Separating this mixed bag is important for making policy. For instance,

**Highly visible and discussed freebies:** The most notable freebies include, free televisions distributed in Tamil Nadu, free cycles distributed in Bihar, and laptops distributed in Uttar Pradesh.

**Other visible subsidies:** The highly visible and discussed freebies are fiscally insignificant compared to the much larger subsidies on food, fertiliser and petroleum. These “visible” subsidies in government budgets remain a major source of fiscal stress.

**Invisible subsidies:** These include especially in state government budgets, not always recognised as such, but which are also very large.

**Other subsidies:** These include freebies of pure cash grants for poor households.

**Read more:** [With no subsidy, cooking fuel burns a hole in consumers' pocket](#)

What is the status of the subsidy in India?

**Subsidy-GDP link:** According to a study, the volume of subsidies as a proportion of GDP comes down with rising per capita incomes. For instance, The total volume of subsidies came down from 13% of GDP way back in 1987-88 to a little over 10% by 2015-16.

**Major provider:** State governments provide the bulk of these subsidies, mainly for social services like education and health. The central government accounts for less than 30% of total subsidies, provided mainly for economic services including food.

Which subsidies should India eliminate?

India should allow “merit subsidies.” These are essential for the public interest. These include subsidies on **1) food, 2) education and health services, 3) water supply and 4) sanitation** have large benefits for society.

These four “merit” subsidies account for only a third of total subsidies. Thus, two-thirds of total subsidies, about 6% of GDP, are unwarranted freebies or non-merit subsidies which should be eliminated.

**Read more:** [Growing Food Subsidy Bill: Reasons and Suggestions](#)

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Why does India need to eliminate non-merit subsidies?

Phasing out these unwarranted freebies, along with much of the tax exemptions and concessions will amount to about 5% of GDP. That would free up huge fiscal space for the government.

This would enable a massive reduction in the combined fiscal deficit of the Centre and the states, while at the same time stepping up required expenditure on education, health and infrastructure.

Can India provide “Universal Basic Income” instead of non-merit subsidies?

These demands are supported by global corporate leaders like Mark Zuckerberg as well as leading economists and think tanks.

Schemes like MGNREGA and other schemes in the states pay much less than the minimum wage, they obviously cannot raise rural wages beyond what is the legal minimum wage anyway.

A randomised control trial (RCT) by SEWA in Madhya Pradesh shows that small cash support provided in the villages will be spent primarily on seeking better education for children, repairing dwelling huts and supplementing the very meagre diets of these poor households. Hence, India should implement UBI.

**Read more: [Issue of fertilizer subsidy in India – Explained, Pointwise](#)**

### 26. [How To End The Jail Mania? – On Bail system of India](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**How to end the jail mania?**” published in **The Times of India** on 22nd July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

**Relevance:** Fundamental Rights

**News;** Recently, questions have been raised by the Chief Justice of India and the Supreme Court on the status of the criminal justice system (CJS). The Chief Justice of India used the expression “Process (of Criminal justice system) is punishment” to describe the state of the present system.

#### **What are the issues that are highlighted in the Criminal Justice System of India?**

**First,** the SC judgment emphasized that there are three fundamental presuppositions of a criminal trial India criminal justice system, 1) **presumption of innocence**; 2) **jail being an exception**; and 3) **the sanctity of personal liberty**.

However, arbitrary arrests and denial of bail to the accused have become normal. The above fundamentals are being ignored.

**Second,** there are **25 central and state preventive detention** laws that seek to control **everyday crime**. Under these laws, a person can be detained on mere suspicion and never be put to trial. For example, in 2020, around 89,405 persons were detained under preventive detention laws.

In India, **offences relating** to terror, drugs, sexual abuse against children are all subjected to strict bail restrictions and presumption of guilt.

**Third,** SC stated that arbitrary arrests and denial of bail are the hallmarks of a **police state**. In 2020, around 70 lakhs people were **preventively arrested** under various provisions of the CrPC. Further, these included thousands of arrests under provisions that do not even provide for arrest.

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**Fourth, Section 437 of the CrPC**, which deals with bail, restricts bail in **offences punishable** with death and life imprisonment. This leaves **unfettered discretion** in the hands of every judge who hears a bail case.

Therefore, there is an **unpredictable application** of bail provision by our courts. Further, there are **conspicuous inconsistencies** in who gets bail, who does not, and at what stage of the trial the bail is granted.

### What are the suggestions of Supreme Court?

All the **investigative agencies** must follow the procedure for arrest as laid down under the **Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)**.

The court called arrest, a “**draconian measure**” that must be used “sparingly”.

It also recommended the enactment of a “Bail Act”, a **special law** to streamline the process of granting bail.

### What are the foundational principles of criminal law that should be followed in the special bail act?

- (1) Bail must be recognised as a general right.
- (2) Bail can be rejected only if the court finds **substantial grounds** to believe that the accused will fail to surrender, commit an offence, or interfere with witnesses if released on bail.
- (3) Bail is not to be denied as a form of **punishment**.

### How can the court’s suggestion pave the way for reform?

The bail act might help address the **inadequacies** of the current bail system.

The bail law will ensure that the **criminal process** will remain sacrosanct and would no longer be felt as the punishment.

There should be a provision for the **Annual Confidential Reports of judges** who routinely deny bail to be subject to strict scrutiny.

### [27. Why the Rajya Sabha matters](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Why the Rajya Sabha matters**” published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

**Relevance:** To understand the functions of Rajya Sabha.

**News:** Given the political scenario in the country, an appraisal of the functions of the Rajya Sabha becomes necessary.

About the formation of the Rajya Sabha

The genesis of the Rajya Sabha can be traced to the Montague-Chelmsford report of 1918. Consequently, the Government of India Act, 1919 provided for a second federal chamber or the “Council of States”.

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The relevance of the Rajya Sabha was debated in the Constituent Assembly. Few members argued that such a House, over and above the Lok Sabha, would unnecessarily delay law-making.

However, many others argued that the “second chamber” would instead introduce an element of solemnity and enhance the quality of debate and discussion.

**Must read:** [What has Rajya Sabha achieved that a stand-alone Lok Sabha has not, or would not?](#)

On what matters Rajya Sabha exercises limited powers?

**1) Money bills:** The Lok Sabha has the power to introduce Money Bills and also exercises the final say over these bills, **2) A no-confidence motion cannot be introduced in the Rajya Sabha,** **3) Rajya Sabha exercises a limited role in the functioning of the Public Accounts Committee and has no part in the Estimates Committee.**

On what matters Rajya Sabha exercises special powers?

**a) The Rajya Sabha exercises the ability to create new All-India Services under Article 312 by passing a resolution subject to support and voting by two-thirds of members,** **b) The Rajya Sabha exercises power to make laws on any subject included in the State List toward “national importance” under Article 249,** **c) Rajya Sabha can approve proclamations under Article 352 or 356 or 360 if the Lok Sabha stands dissolved.**

**Read more:** [Rajya Sabha is essential for Indian democracy](#)

What is the significance of Rajya Sabha?

**a) Rajya Sabha ensures healthy bicameralism** by providing some kind of accountability to the law-making process undertaken in the Lok Sabha, **b) The process of indirect elections (elected by the members of the state legislative assemblies) acts as a passage between the states, people, and Parliament. This furthers the principles of decentralisation** by lending an independent voice to the states.

**c) Rajya Sabha meticulously analyses the merits and demerits of a Bill.** It also empowers its members to voice resistance, dissent, or any disagreement, even if the Lok Sabha dominates as the primary stakeholder in the law-making process.

On all bills except Money Bills, there exists a balance of power between the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

**d) The provision of the nomination of eminent persons from fields makes Rajya Sabha even more democratic and participatory.**

**e) Rajya Sabha is not subject to dissolution. Hence, it is often referred to as the permanent house of Parliament.**

**Read more:** [Explained: How are Rajya Sabha MPs elected?](#)

How to empower the functioning of the Rajya Sabha further?

**Give more voice to State concerns:** Matters related to finance, fiscal federalism, and economic reforms must be brought under the purview of the Rajya Sabha. This will further help articulate states' concerns and strengthen the premise of cooperative and competitive federalism.

**Should not be a resort to non-elected party members:** The Rajya Sabha must not be used by political parties to accommodate candidates who fail to win mass elections. Instead, parties should select their candidates with the specific role of the Upper House in mind.

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**Need to safeguard the rights of states:** Rajya Sabha's rich quality of ideas and debate, and the discussions in the Rajya Sabha mould the thinking of students, political enthusiasts, and the general masses. But there have been veiled encroachments as well as attacks on the rights of states. Rajya Sabha needs to safeguard the rights of states.

### 28. [Judging Our Judges](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "[Judging our judges](#)" published in **The Times of India** on **23rd July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Functioning of the Indian Judiciary

**Relevance:** Judicial Transparency and Accountability

**News:** Recently, AK Ganguly, a former judge of the Supreme Court, commented that India is a "**mature**" **democracy**. However, JB Pardiwala, a present SC judge, commented more recently that India isn't a "**completely mature**" **democracy**. This raised a debate over whether India is a "mature" democracy?

#### **What are the parameters of a mature democracy?**

Transparency is the **hallmark** of a **mature democracy**. This implies the **dissemination of information** to the citizen, especially about the public servants who are funded through the **public exchequer**. This also applies in the case of Indian democracy.

Democracy seems to be more mature when the disclosure of information has been done voluntarily than due to the stick of law (or legal mandate).

#### **Why is India a mature democracy?**

The public servants including **Ministers, MPs, and Bureaucrats** (all-India services) disclose information about their assets and liabilities.

The government has also enacted the [Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act \(2013\)](#) for that reason.

#### **Why is India not a completely mature democracy?**

In India, the judiciary has failed to disclose the information voluntarily.

The government tried to make it mandatory through the '**Declaration of Assets and Liabilities by Supreme Court, High Court and Subordinate Court Judges Bill**' of 2009. However, the law could not be passed.

In 2009, the **Central Information Commission (CIC)** tried to bring judges under the ambit of the RTI. But SC and HCs exempted themselves from the disclosure under Right to Information (RTI) Act.

In 1997, the SC adopted a resolution, making **asset disclosure** mandatory for SC judges. Some of the HCs also followed the path. But they mandated the disclosure within "**a reasonable time**" after assuming office. There were no clear deadlines. Therefore, the rules failed.

In 2009, the SC resolution watered down **mandatory disclosure** to voluntary disclosure. Further, the 2009 resolution of the Supreme Court (SC) was followed by around **25 High Courts (HCs)**.

#### **Status of voluntary disclosure by the Judges at Global and India (A) Indian Judiciary (as of 13 July 2022)**

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(1) The **SC's website** gives **asset information** for only four judges. Of these, two (including the former Chief Justice) have already retired.

(2) Out of 25 HCs, only 7 HCs have put the information about the assets and liabilities of judges on their websites. However, the percentage of judges who have **done voluntary declarations** varies across these 7 HCs.

(a) Punjab & Haryana HC, Kerala HC, and Himachal HC have disclosed information of 75% of judges. Thus, these can be said to be matured institutions.

(b) The Delhi HC has published information of only 36. 1% judges.

**(B) Global:** As per the findings of the report titled '**Getting the Full Picture on Public Officials**' in 2017, published by the **World Bank** and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (**UNODC**).

(1) In more than half of the 161 countries covered, judges and prosecutors mandatorily disclose assets.

(2) More than 60% of the SC judges have done disclosure.

(3) In 56% of those 161 countries, in addition to the **public officials**, judges and prosecutors are also required to **disclose assets**.

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# General Studies Paper –3

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General Studies - 3

1. [The rise in the incidence of digital fraud](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**The rise in the incidence of digital fraud**” published in **Business Standard** on **17th Jul 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Economy – Money and Banking

**Relevance:** Financial fraud in the banking sector and related issues

**Context:** Over the years, there has been a significant change in the types of frauds affecting the banking industry.

Moreover, the economic slowdown has only heightened the risk of fraud and money laundering for the banks.

Why managing financial fraud is significant?

Managing fraud has become more important for banks, due to **a)** increased regulatory scrutiny, **b)** increased stakeholder expectations and **c)** the detrimental effect of the actual fraud loss incurred.

Change in the nature of frauds

There is an increase in digital or technology-related frauds, such as ATM skimming, mobile/internet banking, and identity/data theft, in addition to cyber risks faced by banks.

Why cybercrime needs to be tackled effectively by banks?

Cybercrime and tech-related frauds cause **a)** reputational damage, **b)** diminished customer and investor confidence, and **c)** theft/loss of personally identifiable information. Together, these add up to substantial risks for financial services companies.

These issues ultimately have the potential to affect the financial ecosystem and, in extreme cases, may lead to a systemic crisis.

What are the measures that banks should initiate?

Banks should consider investing in technology to evolve their fraud risk management frameworks (FRM) to tackle newer and more complex challenges.

Banks and financial institutions (FIs) should consider the following proactive steps:

- Banks need to integrate a larger **financial crime compliance agenda** that will work across the business, compliance, legal, credit, and operations departments.
- Institutions need to take the time to measure the effectiveness, appropriateness, and efficiency of existing controls against an **updated risk assessment**.
- The current methods of FRM are plagued with a lack of centralised control/monitoring from various systems, and issues related to data availability and quality. This results in **increased frauds and delayed detection**.
- In light of impending risks from digital platforms, banks should consider **building cyber-risk management programmes** to achieve three essential capabilities: the ability to be secure, vigilant, and resilient.

Way forward

Risks are inherent in the banking business. However, with frauds on the rise, organisations need to put their business in order by having effective control mechanisms in place.

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### 2. [We need an orderly transition from coal to renewables](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “We need an orderly transition from coal to renewables” published in the Indian Express on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Infrastructure: Energy, ports, roads etc.

**Relevance:** Energy Security and Energy Transition

**News:** Since the onset of the pandemic and over the past few months, after the Ukraine-Russia war, commodity prices, especially that of energy, have surged worldwide, which has raised concerns over energy security.

#### **Steps taken to measure inflation in the coal sector in India**

Introduction of the **national coal index** (NCI) as the wholesale price index (WPI) for coal has no component of imported coal.

The NCI reflects international coal prices. It provides a benchmark for **revenue-sharing contracts** being executed after the auctions for **commercial mining of coal**.

#### **Status of inflation in the coal sector**

For the last six months, the WPI for Coal has been stable at around 131. Over the same period, the **NCI** has jumped from about 165 to about 238 reflecting the sharp increase in international coal prices.

#### **Measures to address inflation in the coal sector in India.**

The **domestic coal industry** has responded with an increase of over 30% in coal production from April to June to reduce the exposure of the domestic economy to the price volatility of international markets.

The government has permitted **commercial mining** and allowed the private sector to produce more coal.

#### **What are the measures needed to make the above-mentioned steps more effective?**

**First**, The Ministry of Power needs to finalize its **draft National Electricity Policy** 2021 as the policy is poised to articulate the importance of **domestic coal-based generation** in the country.

**Second**, the **financial community** has to be sensitised to the need of increasing domestic coal production to meet the growing energy demand. The industry and financial community should adopt a more holistic approach toward **environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria**.

**Third**, the **regulator** should address the issues arising from a **greater role of the private sector** in coal production. There should be a single point of contact for the industry in the form of a dedicated regulator. It would help the new private commercial miners to overcome problems that could arise in due course.

**Fourth**, in addition to **increasing domestic production of coal**, there is a requirement to ensure **diversification of the production base** and improvement in the **quality of the coal** produced in India.

**Fifth**, there is a need for reforms in **various cross subsidies** which cause **undue financial burden** on the coal sector.

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### Way Forward

Although coal is a major cause in GHG emissions. But it is **unavoidable** for India's energy security in the near future. Therefore, there is a need to adopt **processes for orderly transition** from coal to **500 GW of renewables**.

However, **high prices of coal** and **coal-based generation** may encourage import of coal and it will expose us to international energy prices fluctuation. Therefore, there should be increased focus on domestic production of coal.

### 3. Declining wheat inventories: Grain of the matter

**Source:** The post is based on an article "Grain of the matter" published in the Business Standard on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Public Distribution System – Objectives, Functioning, Limitations, Revamping; Issues of Buffer Stocks and Food Security; ; Major Crops – Cropping Patterns in various parts of the country,

**Relevance:** Buffer stock and related issues

**News:** There has been a sharp decline in the **government's wheat inventories** to 28.5 million tonnes this year. This is the lowest since 2008.

#### Reasons for sharp decline of inventories

About 1.8mn tonnes of wheat was sent to about a dozen countries, including Bangladesh and Afghanistan, even after the imposition of the ban on wheat exports.

#### Why should the declining inventories be not a matter of concern?

The inventory is still about a **million tonnes** higher than the stocks needed to be held as buffer and strategic reserves for food security purposes.

Besides, there is **no dearth of wheat** in the market despite record exports and liberal shipments to other countries on humanitarian grounds.

The prices of wheat in the open market, too, have remained fairly stable. It is another indication of the comfortable supply position.

#### What are the reasons for the depletion of wheat holdings?

The **intense heat** in March 2022 caused the grains to shrivel and ripen prematurely without attaining full mass. Therefore, there was a fall in crop output. For example, Wheat output, anticipated originally to be over 109 million tonnes, fell to 106.4 million tonnes.

The government's procurement of wheat dipped by a huge 60% due to **lower market arrivals**. It happened because private traders, and notably exporters, purchased wheat at rates higher than the minimum support prices (MSPs).

#### Why is the reduction in the government's grain stockholding a welcome development?

From the economic standpoint, this would help bring down the cost the Food Corporation of India (FCI) incurs on holding surplus food stocks.

### Way Forward

Instead of wheat, the government can help the countries facing acute **food insecurity** through rice export.

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(1) The government can **prune** the **inventories of rice**, which, at present, are estimated at more than double the requirement of the public distribution system (PDS) and food-based welfare programmes. The government can sell stock of rice in the domestic market. The private traders can export.

(2) The World Trade Organization (WTO) rules disallows exports from the **public food stocks**. Therefore, India can plea to WTO to waive this restriction in view of the current global food crisis.

The **cropping patterns** should be diversified from the **paddy crop** to other crops, especially oilseeds, for which the country is still heavily dependent on imports.

Some states, including **Punjab** and **Haryana**, have already begun **offering cash incentives** to farmers to replace **paddy** with other crops. There is scope for similar moves in many other states as well.

#### 4. [Nationalisation, consolidation and privatisation](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Nationalisation, consolidation, and privatisation” published in the Business Standard on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Issues and Challenges pertaining to the growth and development of Indian Economy

**Relevance:** Privatization of Public Sector Banks

**News:** Recently, the privatisation of the public sector banks (PSBs) and insurance companies was discussed by the Finance Minister of India.

#### **History of Nationalization in India**

**First round:** In 1969, there were 73 commercial banks. But the Government of India nationalized a set of **fourteen private banks** in India.

**Second round of nationalisation:** It was executed in 1980 when six more banks were nationalized.

Now there are 78 PSBs, excluding small finance banks and payments banks as well as regional rural banks and local area banks.

#### **The Privatization Plan**

Ahead of the privatisation plan, the government consolidated PSBs drive to make the banks bigger and stronger. Following this, the number of PSBs has shrunk from 27 in 2017 to 12 at present.

First, the government committed itself to privatise IDBI Bank. Therefore, the privatisation of the **IDBI Bank Ltd.** is under process. For example, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) acquired 51% in IDBI Bank. LIC has committed to infuse capital for five years, if required, and dilute its stake to 40% within 12 years etc.

In the **Union Budget 2021-22**, an announcement was made for privatization of 2 among 12 public sector banks (PSBs).

The government has amended **the Banks Nationalisation Act** to pave the path for privatisation of the PSBs. It mandates the government to bring down its stake just below 51% of the overall shareholding.

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### What are the reasons for privatization?

The Prime Minister has said that the government's job is to care for the poor, ensure food, toilets, houses, and supply of clean drinking water. The government has **"no business to be in business"**.

### What are the issues in the privatization of the PSBs?

Traditionally, the government has been divesting its stake in public sector undertakings to make **money** but the logic behind **privatisation** of banks is to stop using **public money** as a lifeline. However, since 1994, the government has pumped in close to Rs 4.5 trillion in these banks as capital.

The Nationalisation Act confers **sweeping controlling powers** to the government, which are not available to any other major shareholders.

– It can issue directions to the **nationalised banks** in the **public interest**. Technically, it needs to be done after consulting with the **Reserve Bank of India** but the Department of Financial Services, a finance ministry arm, does this often without keeping the banking regulator in the loop.

– The government has the power to appoint **whole-time directors** including managing director (MD), **non-executive chairman** and **other members** in the board of directors of the PSBs.

The government can supersede the **board** and even sanction making of regulations

The government has the power to liquidate any bank; and also, its nod is necessary for merger between two public sector banks.

In sum, the government enjoys more powers than a **majority stakeholder** in the Public Sector Banks. The government acts as the **superboard** as it possesses both ownership and regulatory powers.

### Way Forward

The government needs to make more changes to excite investors about the PSBs as merely bringing down the government stake below 51% may not find any taker for the PSBs.

The government must **bring down its holding to at least 26%** because any serious investor will be willing to look at PSBs when it will have a say in the affairs of the bank with higher voting rights.

Finally, the government should increase the tenure of the CEOs and EDs beyond 60 years and provide **market-linked compensation**. For example, in private banks, the CEO's age has been capped at 70 years. The **P J Nayak Committee (2014)** has also made similar recommendations.

### 5. [Four-day work week: The five-day work week might be fading away](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article **"The five-day work week might be fading away"** published in **The Hindu** on **19th July 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About the four-day work week.

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**News:** The idea of a four-day week against the usual 40-hour, five-day work week has been mooted for decades.

What are the findings of four-day work week studies?

**Microsoft trial:** The most recent and widespread adoption of a four-day work week was a trial run by Microsoft in Japan in 2019. The study witnessed a **40% increase in worker productivity**, presumably due to increased job satisfaction and lower burnouts.

Apart from workers' productivity, the company also witnessed higher efficiency in the form of **lower office costs**. It saw a massive 23% dip in electricity costs and a 60% fall in the number of pages printed in the office.

**Other trials:** Most trials of a four-day work week seem to increase or at least keep constant worker productivity. However, an increase in a worker's productivity in a manufacturing firm with a decrease in work hours would not mean a similar increase in productivity for an employee in the service sectors such as education or health.

**Note:** In Iceland, around 86% of employees have the right to work on a four-day work week.

What are the benefits of a four-day work week?

**1)** Fewer working days will lead to **lower commuting and hence have a positive impact on the environment**, including a fall in electricity consumption in offices, **2)** It can be an **important tool to revive employment rates** after the novel coronavirus pandemic, **3)** It will increase work-life balance and a **step toward gender equality and women's career progression**. This is because women often opt for smaller shifts and shorter work days for lower pay after they become mothers.

**Read more:** [Gig Workers and their challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the challenges associated with the four-day work week?

A four-day work week is **not one that fits all**. For instance, **a)** The **service sector** has challenges implementing a four-day work week, especially for small firms, **b)** The **sales and marketing departments** of firms may also face issues as there would be less time to chase leads, build customer relations and solve issues, **c)** Further, employees in firms that would not decrease work hours in a four-day work week would have to work 10 hours on working days, which can **lead to increased stress and decreased satisfaction**, **d)** It will also affect employees' holiday entitlements.

What is the situation of a four-day work week in India?

**Study:** A private study in India found that among 1,113 employers it surveyed, 60% preferred a four-day work week and believed that it would positively affect employee productivity and well-being.

**Government response:** Recognising this, the Central government is set to roll out the new labour codes, which include rules for a flexible four-day work week. The new codes stipulate the requirement of a minimum of 48 hours per week; hence the employee will have to work for 12 hours on each working day.

**Expected Output:** This is not likely to increase productivity as the increased per day hours of work would work against employee motivation to increase output.

**Suggestions:** The draft code should only reduce the number of workdays, keeping the number of hours fixed.

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The draft code should not forget the Parkinson's law that says work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion, and it should be a guiding principle in designing India's new labour codes.

### 6. [Climate change-induced disasters: India's climate imperative](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**India's climate imperative**" published in **The Hindu** on **19th July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Disaster and disaster management.

**Relevance:** Climate change-induced disasters.

**News:** In the absence of COVID-19, climate change-induced disasters would have been India's biggest red alert in recent years. The heatwave in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and New Delhi this year; torrential downpours in south India in 2021; and the super cyclone Amphan that battered West Bengal and Odisha in 2020 are symbols of man-made climate change.

**Read more:** [Somit Dasgupta writes: Bonn meet shows slim chance of action on climate change](#)

What is the intensity of climate change-induced disasters in India?

Temperatures over the Indian Ocean have risen by over 1 °C since the 1950s, increasing extreme weather events. India is the fourth worst hit in climate migration.

Heat waves in India have claimed an estimated 17,000 lives since the 1970s. Labour losses from rising heat, by one estimate, could reach ₹1.6 lakh crore annually if global warming exceeds 2°C, with India among the hardest hit.

**Read more:** [India's monsoon faces climate change. Earth needs a 'soft path for water' now](#)

How to mitigate climate change-induced disasters?

**Tackling heatwaves:** **a)** The government has to promote agricultural practices which are not water-intensive and support afforestation that has a salutary effect on warming, **b)** Financial transfers can be targeted to help farmers plant trees and buy equipments, **c)** Insurance schemes such as weather-based crop insurances can transfer some of the risks of extreme heat faced by industrial, construction and agricultural workers to insurers, **d)** Climate-resilient agriculture calls for diversification such as, the cultivation of multiple crops on the same farm. There will need to be more localised food production.

**Mitigating Floods and storms:** **a)** The Southern States need stronger guidelines to avoid construction in locations with drainages, **b)** Mapping flood-risk zones to manage vulnerable regions, **c)** Environment Impact Assessments must be made mandatory for commercial projects, **d)** Construction of flood-resistant houses like built-in Kerala on pillars.

**Preventing landslides and enhancing dam safety:** Management of dams can exacerbate glacier lake outbursts and floods. So, India should enforce regulations to stop the building of dams on steep slopes and eco-fragile areas, as well as the dynamiting of hills, sand mining, and quarrying.

**At the National and State level:** **a)** India's share in disaster management should be **raised to 2.5% of GDP**, **b)** States should tap into the Union government's resources, financial and technological, from early warning meteorological systems to centrally sponsored climate schemes, **c)** MGNREGA funds can be used for climate adaptation in agriculture, waste management and livelihoods, **d)** States could make a compensatory payment to local self-government resources being used for climate adaptation.

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**Global steps required:** 1) Leading emitters, including India, must move away from fossil fuels, 2) Regulation needs to be tightened and enforced to ensure forest protection while acquiring land.

**Read more:** [Making sense of Assam floods: Why rivers turned violent in the 20th century and how climate change is making them more unpredictable](#)

### 7. [Centre must welcome Chin refugees with open arms, Mizoram is already doing so](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Centre must welcome chin refugees with open arms, Mizoram is **already** doing so” published in the Indian Express on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Internal Security,

**Relevance:** India’s refugee policy

**News;** In recent years, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has accused Myanmar’s Tatmadaw, a junta regime of perpetrating “crimes against humanity”. The rule has led to displacement of half a million Myanmar’s people within the country and forcing more than 50,000 ethnic Chin and others to seek refuge outside.

**What were the issues in front of the Indian government on account of the Chin people influx into India?**

There has been an unprecedented divergence between the **Indian government** and the **Mizoram state government**. The Centre has adopted a **security-centric approach** and the Mizoram government has adopted a **people-centred focus**.

**What is the Centre’s perspective on refugees?**

The Chin refugees are not refugees who have simply run away to save their lives. They are rebels who have opted to go into **self-exile** and continue to extend support to the **People’s Defence Forces (PDF)** and other **anti-Tatmadaw militias** like the **Chin Defence Force** and the **Chin National Army**. Therefore, MHA advised the state government to stay alert and take appropriate action to prevent a possible influx into Indian territory.

The Centre directed the North-eastern states bordering Myanmar that they do not have powers to grant “**refugee status to any foreigner**”.

**What is the state government’s perspective on refugees?**

The Mizoram government has **defied** the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** orders to “**detect and deport the refugees**”. The Mizoram state has extended a warm welcome to everybody wanting to come and decided to take Chin refugees. Simultaneously, the state government has also strongly communicated to the Central government that it cannot be “**indifferent**” to its concerns.

**What were the issues in the Centre’s decision of not to grant asylum?**

The Central government has denied asylum to the Chin people on the ground of India’s **non-ratification** of the **1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees** and also its **1967 Protocol**.

However, not being a party to the Convention does not prevent any state from granting asylum to the asylum seeker.



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Moreover, even non-signatories are bound under **customary international law** to follow the principle of **non-refoulement** that protects the rights of asylum seekers not to be deported or pushed back to the country they have fled to escape violence in the first place.

### **What are the reasons behind the Mizoram government's move to allow refugee status?**

Both Mizo and Chin communities share a **common history**. There are unique **social-political realities** between the two people at the India-Myanmar international border.

Both come from the same larger **Zo tribe**, therefore share a strong **ethnic bond** predating India's Independence.

Both communities are bound together by a **common religion**, i.e., both are **predominantly Christians**.

There is a **Free Movement Regime (FMR) 2018** between India and Myanmar that allows both communities on either side to go up to 16 km on the other side and stay up to 14 days. Therefore, border landers routinely cross over on either side for trade in essential commodities, work, **cross-border marriages**, and as a result to meet relatives.

There is a history of mutual **empathy** and **solidarity** between the Mizos and the Chins. The Chin people have extended support and sanctuary to the members of the **Mizo National Front**. Similarly, during the **1988 pro-democracy movement** in Myanmar, the Mizos extended a helping hand to the Chins who were subjected to brutal repression at the hands of the junta regime

### **The Way Forward**

The Centre should recalibrate its policy toward the refugees and their hosts. It should grant refugee status to the Chin people. Further, it should help the state government to sustain the relief work.

### 8. [Zombies of the West](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Zombies of the West**" published in **The Times of India** on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Issues and Challenges in the growth and development of Indian Economy

**Relevance:** Productivity; Zombie Economy

**News:** In late 2020, due to pandemic, people adopted digital technology at an accelerating pace. It was widely seen as an important milestone in terms of productivity, as it led to a surge in productivity across the economy.

### **Historical Trends of progress and innovation**

In the earlier era of capitalism, the innovations generated advances such as electricity and gas engines, which lifted productivity across industries.

In the post-war period. The productivity increased. However, the **post-war productivity** boom ended in the 1970s.

Since 1970s, the computer age began, which contributed to the revival of productivity. In the 1990s, there was a productivity revival in retail stores. It was driven by **checkout scanners** and other **digital inventions** used in retail stores.

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However, in terms of the overall trend, there has been a downward trend in productivity for more than 50 years.

### Regional Variation in productivity

**Advanced Countries:** Productivity has declined mostly in all the **advanced countries** like the US Economy.

**Emerging Countries:** In emerging countries, productivity rose steadily from below zero in the 1970s to a peak above 5% in the late 2000s. Since 2010, nearly all **developed countries** have seen productivity drop. But the **productivity** in emerging countries grew by 3% in the 2010s.

### What are the reasons for the downward trend in productivity in advanced economies?

**First Perspective:** The innovations like internet search fail to register in productivity measurements. Further, there are distractions like digital games and social media.

**Second perspective – Big Government:** The role of government has been expanding in advanced economies. The developed economies have increasingly socialized economic losses during the crisis period.

(1) Since, the 1970s, major capitalist countries began running **budget deficits** during the crisis period. Both **monetary and fiscal stimulus** has increased. For example, the stimulus was more than 7% of GDP in 2001, 12% in 2008, and 45% in 2020 during the respective crisis.

(2) The governments have allowed **generous rescues** to the companies. As a result, **corporate defaults** have fallen. For example, In Europe, the default rate fell from around 20% after the 2001 recession to 10% after 2008 and 5% in 2020.

(3) due to the first two, there has been a decline in **entrepreneurial dynamism**. The number of listed US companies fell by half in recent decades and, new business creation plummeted.

(5) More active government support has undermined **creative destruction**, which is the lifeblood of capitalism. Therefore, productivity growth fell, as bailouts and stimulus grew significantly.

(6) The US and European countries are facing the problem of a **zombie economy**. These zombies' companies did not exist in 2000 but now account for **20% of listed companies** in the US, and higher shares in Europe. These companies' prey upon **easy money**. These firms **suck resources** from more dynamic companies and contribute to lower productivity across industries.

### What are the explanations for the productivity paradox or high productivity in emerging economies?

(1) Productivity does not require **scepticism** of **new technology**.

(2) The role of the state has broadly declined in emerging economies since the 1970s. **For example**, countries like China and later India pivoted to more **market-oriented economic systems**.

### What should be done?

Now Inflation is back. It may possibly end the era of easy money, which may in turn remove some of the zombie companies. This will induce a new productivity wave.

The governments need to think about their role in the economy and bring reforms like moving away from the culture of **big government**, a new governing culture of bailouts, market rescues, and constant stimulus.

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### 9. [Why there is no reason to panic over the rupee](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the following articles “**Why there is no reason to panic over the rupee**” published in the **Indian Express** on **20th July 2022**.

“**The RBI should desist from launching a defence of the currency. Let rupee find its own level**” published in the **Indian Express** on **20th July 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** To understand the performance of the Indian Rupee to the US Dollar.

**News:** Due to various international issues, the Indian rupee has now depreciated by 5.6% against the dollar. However, in terms of relative performance, Rupee has done well compared to most of its counterparts except the Indonesian Rupiah.

About the present situation of Rupee

In an ideal world, if domestic economic fundamentals are strong, the depreciation of the rupee should be accompanied by an appreciation of the Dollar Index (DXY).

Between March 2021 and July 2022, the rupee depreciation is 9.7% and the DXY appreciation is a sharp 17.4%.

**Note:** The Dollar index measures the currency’s value against six major currencies.

What are the reasons for the rupee’s depreciation?

**1)** As the US attempts to bring inflation under control, the recent gains in the dollar might come due to **aggressive monetary policy by the US Fed** compared to other major jurisdictions, particularly, the Eurozone and Japan, **2)** Foreign portfolio outflows and the rush to safe assets as fears of a recession begin to gain traction, and **3)** Widening current account deficits: Experts expect that current account deficit upwards of 3 per cent of GDP this year.

Thus, the recent decline in the rupee has been more because of the strengthening of the dollar.

**Must Read:** [The rupee’s ‘new lows’: Why it’s not necessarily a cause for concern](#)

How well the US dollar is performing?

In principle, Bretton Woods ensured that the dollar would be a “trust” currency. The US sits at the centre of an international financial system where its assets have been in high demand. For instance, with the US Fed embarking on one of the steepest rate hike cycles in recent times, investors have rushed to the dollar.

The dollar index has recently registered its highest level since 2002. Higher than expected inflation in the US.

**Read more:** [External vulnerabilities: Time for a rupee review](#)

What is the RBI’s response to the performance of the Rupee?

The RBI and government have taken a long-term view of bolstering dollar inflows. This would mean that the rupee could still face headwinds in the short term.

The RBI announced a series of steps to attract capital inflows to support the currency. Such as, **1)** Relaxations on NRI deposits to ease investments in government and corporate bonds, **2)** Measures for settlement of international trade in rupees to ease pressures on the currency, **3)** The RBI also intervened in the currency markets to stem the rupee’s slide.

**Read more:** [The curious case of India’s rising forex reserves and falling rupee](#)

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What should be done?

Unlike in the past, the RBI should **discontinue launching a currency defence**. It must let the rupee find its own level. This is because, **a)** A weaker rupee will act as an automatic stabiliser, **b)** Though in the near term it increases the risks of importing inflation, over time, it will boost the competitiveness of the country's exports. Thus providing a much-needed fillip at a time when the global economy is facing strong headwinds.

### 10. [Why the sceptics are wrong and we must invest in space](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Why the sceptics are wrong, and we must invest in space**" published in the **Live Mint** on **20<sup>th</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 3, Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology, etc.

**Relevance:** Space Sector and associated reforms

**News:** Last week, the first images from the **James Webb Telescope (JWSP)** were received. The images included **stunning visuals** of what the universe looked like **soon after birth** and clear evidence that the **atmosphere of a planet orbiting** a distant star had water.

#### **Argument against the outer space discoveries**

The planet which has been discovered by the JWSP that might be capable of supporting life is of little use to us. It is impossibly difficult for us to get to that planet.

Some critics pointed out that there are **enough** and **more problems** to solve back here on the earth like basic infrastructure. Therefore, outer space discoveries are nothing but a waste of money.

Despite huge investments in **various space missions**, space travel is still hazardous. Many of the missions have failed on account of variables that are impossible to either predict or mitigate.

#### **Arguments in favour of the outer space discoveries**

There are numerous benefits that have accrued as a result of all the investments we have made so far.

**First**, due to **the constellation of communications satellites** arrayed in the sky above us, it is possible to **speak to anyone** residing anywhere on the planet earth, watch sporting events live from any place on Earth, and receive news from the remotest corners of the planet as soon as it happens.

**Second**, **satellite-based GPS technology** has enabled us to find our way in an unfamiliar city, locate a place to eat, and have things delivered at our doorstep wherever we are.

**Third**, now, the **behavior of weather systems** can be understood. It is easy to predict calamitous events accurately on account of dangerous weather.

**Fourth**, a number of the technologies developed for use in space have applications in our daily lives. For example, **Insulin pumps, Fluid-based dampers, Embedded web technology developed**, etc.

**Fifth**, in the future, space could become a venue for the **industrial manufacture of products** that need to be created in special conditions that only **outer space offers**.

For instance, **fiber optic cable** produced in zero gravity has tolerance levels that are impossible to achieve on Earth.

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### What India should do?

For all these reasons and more, it is very important for India to continue to invest in space.

India needs to ensure **broad-based participation** in the space sector. The private sector should be allowed to step in.

Around the world, **private space endeavors** have demonstrated the **reliability** and **commercial feasibility** of such technologies as re-usable rockets and cube satellites.

The **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe)**, a new agency under the Department of Space, was established. It has been designed to operate as a single-window authority for everything to do with space. It is a step in the right direction. The **IN-SPACe** should actively encourage **private sector participation** in the full range of space activities— from building spacecraft to undertaking launches.

### 11. [The new agriculture panel raises questions](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The new agricultural panel raises questions**” published in the **Indian Express** on **20<sup>th</sup> July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Agriculture and Allied Sector

**Relevance:** Farm Reforms

**News:** The government has finally constituted a committee to promote zero budget-based farming, change crop patterns and make the Minimum Support Price (MSP) more effective and transparent.

The new committee was preceded by a **Supreme Court-appointed panel**. The SC Panel had spoken against the withdrawal of the controversial farm laws. In its report, it said that the “majority” of the farm unions supported the bills, therefore a repeal would be “unfair to this silent majority”.

#### About the committee

It is an exhaustive body of 28 members with **cross representation** from the Central and state governments, farmers union, agricultural scientists and economists.

#### What are the arguments of critics against the formation of the committee?

Many will criticise the committee as out of 8 farmer members in the committee, **five were nominated** by the government and are known to be sympathetic to its views.

Other members and chairman appointed by the government do not have the faith of the farmers community.

Again, the committee, by design, has no state representation from Punjab, a major grain procurement state. This could be used to whip up divisive sentiments in the state.

The committee’s mandate fails to understand the **changing cropping patterns** with **diversification**. It is, at best, a subset of diversification.

The **agricultural problems** cannot be solved by having discussions centred on cropping choices and practices alone. Solutions require **a systems approach**. This cannot happen when the mandate is limited to crops,

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Even though one-third of all agricultural GDP comes from rearing animals, **the Secretary, Ministry of Animal Husbandry** is not even a member of the committee.

Lastly, the committee which has not been given **a time frame** to deliver the report. Therefore, this may lead to release of the report after the **2024 parliamentary elections**.

### What should be done?

The chairman and the members should be appointed who can build trust on the farms related reform.

The government should broaden its imagination to see unimagined opportunities of a food systems approach.

### 12. CAPFs: children of a lesser God

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“CAPFs: children of a lesser God”** published in **The Hindu** on **21st July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

**Relevance:** Recognising the contribution of CAPF personnel.

**News:** In several states of India, the policemen are given step-motherly treatment, but the personnel from the defence services are treated only with a limited quantity of respect.

How do various states treat CAPF personnel?

While defence personnel are paid handsome monetary grants by certain States, several others are economical. For instance,

The Telangana Government provide a grant of ₹2.25 crore for winners of Param Vir Chakra (PVC) (the highest wartime gallantry award) and the Ashoka Chakra (highest peacetime gallantry award). It also provides ₹1.25 crore for Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) (second-highest wartime gallantry award) and the Kirti Chakra (second-highest peacetime gallantry award).

On the other hand, the Tamil Nadu Government provide monetary grants of ₹25 lakh, ₹20 lakh, ₹15 lakh and ₹10 lakh for the PVC, the Ashoka Chakra, the MVC and the Kirti Chakra, respectively.

**Must read:** [Challenges facing Central Armed Police Forces \(CAPFs\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

How can a CAPF personnel get the Chakra series of medals?

CAPFs comprise the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and the Assam Rifles. They were, however, eligible for the Chakra series of medals if the battalions were placed under the operational control of the Army.

The President’s notification of January 1952 had debarred personnel of the police forces and the fire services from being conferred with the chakra series of medals, though civilians were eligible.

The 1999 amendment to the order includes “citizens of either sex in all walks of life and members of police forces including Central Para Military Forces and the Railway Protection Force.”

**Read more:** [Needed: A tribunal for CAPF](#)

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What changes can be done to recognise the sacrifice of CAPFs personnel?

**Institute exclusive medals for CAPFs:** The Government could consider setting up a high-powered committee to go into the basics of **instituting three classes of gallantry medals exclusively for the police forces**. This should be done along the lines of the Ashoka Chakra, the Kirti Chakra and the Shaurya Chakra and could be named Sarvottam Police Chakra (SPC), Uttam Police Chakra (UPC) and Police Chakra (PC).

**Give due recognition:** Those who have been awarded the President's Police and Fire Service Medal for Gallantry (PPFSMG) and the President's Police Medal for Gallantry (PPMG) could be placed at par with the Kirti Chakra and awardees of the PMG could be placed at par with the Shaurya Chakra.

According to the government, over 2,000 personnel, including 47 Gazetted Officers of the CAPF lost their lives on operational duties during the last three years. The sacrifices made by the police and the CAPF personnel in the service of the nation cannot just be ignored.

**Read more: [Government has approved the scheme – Modernisation Plan-IV for Central Armed Police Forces \(CAPFs\)](#)**

### 13. [The West digs for the next energy battle](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “The West digs for the next energy battle” published in the Live Mint on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Infrastructure; Energy

**Relevance:** Green Energy Transition

**News:** In the recent summit meetings of the US-EU in Brussels, the EU Council, the G-7, and NATO, it was noticed that **energy security** figured prominently.

#### **Reasons for the prominence of energy security theme in these meeting**

In recent months, **Russia's** war on Ukraine and **the Western economic sanction** imposed on Russia, have led to a new era of the “weaponization of energy” openly.

At the G-7 Summit, the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report on the security of the supply of raw materials** was highlighted. The report cautioned that the **green energy transition** will require a quantum leap in the use of **critical minerals**, many of which are more **geoeconomically** concentrated than oil. For example, lithium, bismuth, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth production is concentrated in just three countries.

The transition to Electric Vehicles Technology would require batteries for storage. This could increase **lithium demand** by 40 times, and **cobalt by 30 times** by 2040.

#### **Issues with Chinese Dominance**

At present, China threatens to use its dominant position in the green energy sector as a weapon.

**China is endowed with critical minerals:** China controls 50% of global rare earth mining.

Since the 2000s, China has been investing in the **solar photovoltaic (PV) industries**. The PV sector was subsidized as a strategic sector. In 2022, the International Energy Agency warned that 80% of all the world's manufacturing stages related to PV, from polysilicon to ingots, wafers, cells, and modules are in China. It has focused on the vertical integration of the industry.

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China has invested heavily in all the supply chain links for solar and wind energy. Further, it has plans to do the same for all green energies. For Example:

China's **Green Finance Committee** has reported that China is expected to invest \$75 trillion by 2050 in **carbon neutrality financing**. The investment will range from zero-carbon electricity, hydrogen fuel cells, and carbon capture to many more. The investment will be equivalent to over 10% of China's gross domestic product every year.

### The Western Response

The US/NATO wants to decouple with China in many fields of normal economic and sci-tech cooperation.

**At the US-EU Energy Council**, it was stated that **reliable, affordable, and secure energy** can only come from a **decarbonized energy mix** based largely on renewables".

The US and EU announced to have **"laid the foundations for the rules-based international order"**. Further, it was stated that **"some of the rules need an update"** with high priority given to "protect the planet" and "foster green growth".

### About the Mineral Security Partnership

It is a **venture** which was announced during a **major mining conference** in Toronto. It is aimed to bolster **critical mineral supply chains**. It has also been described as **"metallic NATO"**.

**Members:** There are eleven partner countries – US, Canada, Japan, Germany, France, UK, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Korea, Australia along with the European Commission. Some of the countries are **geologically well endowed**, some are **players in mining**, some have strengths in refining, processing and trading of minerals, and some lead the R&D on metallurgy for alternatives.

The Mineral Security Partnership has the potential to influence future investments, technological development, and trade flows in energy raw materials.

### About NATO's new Strategic Concept at Madrid

NATO aims at **"mitigating strategic vulnerabilities"** to counter China's attempts "to control key technological and industrial sectors, critical infrastructure, strategic materials and supply chains."

NATO and its invitees to the meeting i.e., Japan, Korea, and Australia are poised to give a new Asian focus to alliance planning.

### 14. [Rupee@80: The Story Can Get Grimmer](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Rupee@80: The story can get grimmer"** published in The Times of India on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Issues and Challenges pertaining to growth and development of the Indian Economy

**Relevance:** Indian Rupee Depreciation

**News:** Recently, The Indian Rupee has dropped to a record below the 80-mark against the dollar.

### What are the implications of such a depreciation of the India Rupee?



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In contrast to what many are saying that the rupee fall may help the Indian export to grow, the rupee fall may not help our exports. Here's why.

(1) In the case of depreciation, the exports of price-sensitive commodities do well. But exports of **income-sensitive goods** may not necessarily do well. Income-sensitive commodities perform well when there is an upsurge in foreign income. But at present, the incomes in foreign countries are under pressure.

(2) At present, there is **weak global economic growth** due to a **surge in inflation**. For example, the real GDP growth in the Euro Area and China is expected to fall in 2022.

(3) In the case of India, there is a change in the **composition of exports** from **price-sensitive items** such as leather footwear, dairy products, etc., to more **income-sensitive items** such as refined petroleum products, iron and steel, chemicals, machinery, and transport equipment (engineering goods), and pearls and precious stones such as diamonds.

(4) Therefore, at present, there is a **lower demand for income-sensitive items** that comprise a major chunk of India's export basket.

(5) As per the analysis of **intra-industry trade** (IIT), India is losing out to its **competitors**, even in exports of **price-sensitive commodities**. IIT means importing the same line of products, like leather footwear, textiles, and apparel, which a country is exporting, but with different quality.

(a) The quality and value of price-sensitive items that are **imported** into India are much higher than similar items exported from India.

(b) In India, IIT is becoming more widespread because industrial tariffs have in general gone down across countries. This has promoted **overlapping trade flows** within the same product categories.

(6) Therefore, India's major imports like crude oil, precious metals, and coal will continue to cost more as the rupee depreciates.

### **Expected Trends in the Exchange Market – Rupee is likely to fall further**

The Law of One Price (LOOP) theory states that an identical (similar) commodity will cost the same in 2 countries if cost is expressed in a similar currency. It assumes no transport costs and no tariffs on the product. Now, what are the factors that contribute to the reduction of currency value?

(1) Even in the case of LOOP theory, the value of the currency will reduce if Inflation increases.

(2) Domestic inflation is one reason the rupee is under pressure. Further, inflation is unlikely to moderate any time soon due to various reasons:

(a) The recent imposition of GST on pre-packaged food items is likely to increase inflation numbers.

(b) Further **imported inflation** is not going to ease in the coming days.

(3) Rupee is also under pressure due in the **asset markets**. Foreign exchange markets, the foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have become the **net sellers** in the Indian domestic stock market due to high CAD and higher inflationary expectations.

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(4) As per the **UNCTAD's World Investment Report**, foreign direct investment (FDI) fell by 30% to \$45 billion in 2021.

### 15. [India's tenfold path to manage exchange rate volatility](#)

**Source:** the article "India's tenfold path to manage exchange rate volatility" published in the Live Mint on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Issues and Challenges pertaining to growth and development of the Indian Economy

**Relevance:** Indian Rupee Depreciation; macroeconomic condition; Monetary policy measures

**News:** In recent months, India has witnessed the **depreciation** of the Indian rupee to a record level.

**What are the tools in the RBI's monetary and forex policies to handle the situation?**

**(A) Instruments of direct nature:**

(1) To sell dollars in the **spot forex market**. The idea of the **RBI selling dollars** works well in the **currency market**, which keeps guessing how much the central bank is willing to sell at any point in time.

(2) To promote **non-resident Indian (NRI) deposits**. For example, the RBI outreached to NRIs to put in their money in the **Resurgent India bonds** and **India Millennium Deposits** with attractive interest rates, in 1998 and 2000.

**Limitations:** The idea entails forex risk when the debt is redeemed. For example, the rates tend to be attractive at the time of deposits, but the same rate cannot be offered on deposit renewals once the crisis ends.

(3) To get oil importing companies to buy dollars directly from a public sector bank. The deals are not in the open. Therefore, the market does not witness a large demand for dollars on this account.

(4) A **directive** can be issued for **all exporters** to mandatorily bring in their dollars on receipt within a set time period. This prevents an artificial dollar supply reduction due to exporters holding -back the profit.

(5) Curbing the amount of dollars that one can take under **the Liberalized Exchange Rate Management System** for current account purposes like travel, education, healthcare, etc.

(6) The RBI can deal in the **forward-trade market**. It controls volatility because the RBI conducts transactions where only the net amount gets transacted finally. It has the same power as **spot transactions** but without any significant withdrawal of forex from the system.

(7) The RBI can use **the concept of swaps**. In this, the banks collected foreign currency non-resident deposits with a simultaneous swap with RBI. Hence, it was different from earlier bond and deposit schemes. The same idea has been used though **without deposits** being raised. It involves a **sale-purchase transaction** in which dollars are provided to banks with a **commitment** to buy back after, say, 3 years.

**(B) Nowadays, the RBI uses more policy-oriented approaches, and the last three measures announced are in this realm.**

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(2) The RBI allowed the banks to work in the **non-deliverable forwards (NDF) market**. This is a largely **overseas speculative market**. Here, forward transactions take place without **real inflows** or **outflows**, with only price differences settled in dollars. Due to this measure, the rates in this market and in domestic markets have gotten equalized.

Second, the RBI has opened up the **capital account** on **NRI**, external commercial borrowings, and foreign portfolio investments, which has the potential to draw in forex over time.

Third, the RBI has given permission for **foreign trade deals** to be settled in rupees. India is a net importer. Therefore, gains can be made if we pay in rupees for imports.

### 16. [In Pegasus battle, the fight for surveillance reform](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“In Pegasus battle, the fight for surveillance reform”** published in **The Hindu** on **22nd July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Basics of cyber security.

**Relevance:** India’s Pegasus project.

**News:** A year has passed since the disclosures about India’s Pegasus project.

What is India’s Pegasus project?

**Read here:** [Pegasus spyware issue – Explained, pointwise](#)

How transparency is lacking in India’s Pegasus project?

A report by The New York Times on January 31, 2022, stated that ‘India has bought Pegasus in 2017 as part of a \$2-billion’ defence package.

**Refusal from government and its agencies:** The ministers and specialised agencies in India refused to directly address the claims made by the Pegasus Project. Even the CERT-IN (the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team) the nodal agency that deals with cybersecurity threats has remained silent.

What was the judicial response to India’s Pegasus project?

**Read here:** [SC Judgment on Pegasus spyware case – Explained, pointwise](#)

The Court constituted a technical committee to examine whether the spyware had been used on Indian citizens. Eight months have passed, but the committee has yet to arrive at any findings. In May 2022, the committee placed an ‘interim report’ before the Court asking for time to place the final report.

How do other countries respond to their Pegasus project?

**Israel:** The government set up a senior inter-ministerial team to begin an investigation while the Foreign Minister said that the government would work to ensure that Pegasus did not fall into the wrong hands.

**France:** The government ordered a series of investigations within a day of the revelations. Its cybersecurity agency confirmed that the spyware had been used to target French citizens.

**The United States:** The government added NSO to its ‘Entity List for Malicious Cyber Activities’, which restricted the ability of U.S. companies to export goods or services to NSO.

**Note:** Pegasus spyware was created by NSO Group.

**The United Kingdom:** The spyware company implemented a change to ensure that Pegasus could no longer target U.K. numbers after revelations, in 2021.

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**Read more:** [Pegasus scandal points to the making of a surveillance state in India](#)

What is the status of the Surveillance industry in India?

The Indian 'surveillance for hire' industry is growing. These firms offer their services to anyone who can pay, following which they proceed to spy on indicated targets by hacking their devices.

Hence, India should make India's Pegasus project as India's 'Watergate Moment'.

**Note:** In the aftermath of Watergate, the institutional response in the United States held President Richard Nixon and others involved accountable, in which all branches of the state acted to check the abuse of power.

**Read more:** [The Court's order on Pegasus still falls short](#)

What needs to be done?

**Complete overhaul of surveillance laws:** The Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Indian Telegraph Act 1885 empower the Government to surveil. They concentrate surveillance powers in the hands of the executive and do not contain any independent oversight provisions, judicial or parliamentary.

The proposed data protection law does not address these concerns despite proposals from members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee. Instead, the proposed law provides wide exemptions to the Government relating to select agencies from the application of the law. All this has to be addressed.

**Need for comprehensive surveillance reform:** India needs an immediate and far-reaching surveillance reform. This should redress those who approach authorities against unlawful surveillance and encroachment on right to privacy.

**Read more:** [Explained: What is Hermit, the Pegasus-like spyware that targeted Android, iOS devices?](#)

### 17. [Why a ban on single-use plastics won't help](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Why a ban on single-use plastics won't help**" published in the **Indian Express** on **22nd July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environmental pollution and degradation.

**Relevance:** To understand the challenges associated with the Single-use plastic ban.

**News:** India's ban on select single-use plastic(SUPs) items came into effect from July 1, 2022.

**Must read:** [Ban on Single-Use Plastic – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why the ban won't help in reducing plastic pollution?

The plastic packaging of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs), which include sachets and packaging of products like chips, biscuits, and soap were excluded under the rules. So, the ban target only 2-3% of the total plastic produced.

**Read more:** [India's ban on select single-use plastic items: A start but still a long way from blanket ban](#)

What are the findings of various studies on plastic waste?

The global movement, **Break Free From Plastic**, in its brand audit in India in 2021, found that 70% of the plastic audited was marked with a clear consumer brand. The audit found that much of the plastic pollution was caused by products from the top brands.

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The FICCI report describes the backward linkage in plastic production. This includes petroleum intermediate producers, resin and naphtha producers (both raw materials to plastic polymer), pre-packaging manufacturers, plant and machinery, mould and additive producers. Hence, a ban on FMCG packaging would have a significant impact on this entire chain.

What are the other concerns associated with the SUPs?

- 1) In 2015, a report by FICCI and strategy consultants report argued that banning FMCG packaging would affect the processed food industry to the tune of approximately Rs 90,000 crore per annum, amounting to 72% of the industry.
- 2) The 2021 Rules treat SUPs generated by FMCG and non-FMCGs differently.

**Read more:** [Single-use plastic ban: Reading the fine print reveals ominous loopholes](#)

What should be done to reduce plastic pollution?

The government should start re-envisioning the retail system. The focus should be on moving away from the use-and-throw economy to one which is designed for reusable and sustainable packaging.

### 18. [Why Weaker Rupee Isn't All Bad News](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article **“Why weaker Rupee is not all bad news?”** published in **The Times of India** on **22nd July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3** Indian Economy; Issues and Challenges pertaining to growth and development of the Indian Economy

**Relevance:** Macroeconomic conditions; Rupee Depreciation

**News:** Recently, the foreign exchange rate breached the mark of Indian Rupee 80 per dollar.

**What are the real problems with rupee?**

[Why there is no reason to panic over the rupee](#)

As per **the dollar index**, the dollar has appreciated across currencies. Therefore, there has been depreciation of the pound sterling, the euro, and the currencies of nearly all emerging markets (EM) including the Indian rupee. However, the **Indian rupee's depreciation** has been surprisingly modest, despite the fact that the capital has been flowing out of the country at the same time.

**So, what can be done?**

(A) Some observers argued that India can utilise (or sell a portion) the **foreign exchange reserves** amounting to **\$580 billion** at present.

**Limitation of the foreign exchange intervention**

(1) When the central bank sells foreign reserves, then commercial banks are required to give rupees in return. Therefore, the banks will run out of liquidity. This will tighten money supply and, thereby endangering economic recovery.

(2) The RBI can do **“sterilisation”** to solve liquidity crunch due to foreign exchange intervention. The RBI will buy government bonds from the banks. However, If the RBI purchases large amounts of bonds in the market, this could **push bond rates down** to inappropriately low levels, thereby endangering the **inflation target**.

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(3) Since investors know that there is a limit to the **foreign exchange sales**, they will be tempted to try to purchase as much dollars as they can right now. This will further increase the pressure on the exchange rate.

**(B) Therefore, we need to go back to fundamentals and ask: Do we really want to prevent rupee depreciation?**

(1) The two most important **drivers of growth** for an emerging economy (EM) like India are **investment** and **exports**. However, the **Private sector investment** in India has been sluggish for several years.

(2) But India's last year's recovery was highly **dependent on the growth of Indian exports**. Therefore, the only **engine of growth upon which** India can rely to ensure economic recovery is the **export**.

(3) Therefore, the government should not prevent Rupee depreciation because If rupee appreciates against other Asian currencies such as the South Korean won, the Thai baht and the Taiwanese dollar, India will lose its **export competitiveness** in the global trade.

### Limitation

Of course, there are costs to **a weak rupee**. The **depreciation** will push up **inflation**.

### 19. [Recent Supreme Court judgment on IBC may weaken insolvency regime](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Recent Supreme Court judgment on IBC may weaken insolvency regime**" published in the **Indian Express** on **22nd July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Issues and Challenges pertaining to growth and development of Indian Economy; Effects of Liberalization on the Economy, Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

**Relevance:** Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

**News:** Recently, the **Supreme Court of India** passed an important judgment on insolvency and bankruptcy in the **Vidarbha Industries Power Ltd. v. Axis Bank Case**.

SC recently held that the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** cannot admit an insolvency application filed by a financial creditor merely because a financial debt exists and the corporate debtor has defaulted in its repayment.

### What are the concerns associated with the judgment?

A critical element for any corporate insolvency law is **the point of trigger**. It means the law must clearly provide the **grounds** on which an **insolvency application** against a corporate debtor should be admitted. If there is any confusion at this stage, **precious time** could be wasted in **litigation**.

On the other hand, if the law is **clear** and **litigation** can be minimised, the distressed business could be resolved faster. Its value **could** be preserved. And all stakeholders collectively would **benefit**.

Therefore, the government should develop **objective legal criteria** for an effective corporate insolvency law.

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### What were the points of triggers that can be used for initiating insolvency proceeding?

- (1) The **balance-sheet test** is one method for determining insolvency at the point of trigger. However, the balance-sheet test is vulnerable to the quality of accounting standards. Therefore, the Bankruptcy Law Reforms Committee (BLRC) did not favour this test in the Indian context
- (2). The BLRC recommended a **twin-test**. In this, a filing creditor should only provide a record of the liability (debt), and evidence of **default on payments** by the corporate debtor. It provides a clear and objective trigger for insolvency resolution. This test was expected to **minimise litigation** at the admission stage of the **insolvency application**, and enable **quicker resolution** of distressed businesses.

### Possible Implication of the SC ruling

- (1) The SC interpretation of the law could **fundamentally reshape** a crucial innovation in the IBC framework.
- (2) The SC's latest ruling is likely to cause failure of the **twin-test**, recommended by the BLRC. Now, even if the NCLT is satisfied that the corporate debtor has defaulted, it would not be able to admit the case for resolution if the corporate debtor resists admission on any other grounds.
- (3) Now, the corporate debtors are likely to use this precedent to the fullest to **resist admission** into IBC.
- (4) There would be **more litigation** and **delay** at the **admission stage**, enhancing the risks of **value destruction** in the underlying distressed business and all stakeholders collectively would suffer.
- (5) The IBC may well end up like the **Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 (SICA)**. The SICA was also subjected to **pro-revivalist judicial approach** in various judgments. This led to the establishment of the **Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)** as a specialist tribunal to ensure **speedy resolution** of distressed industrial companies. The BIFR became a haven where companies could seek shelter from their creditors for years. This led to a lot of delays as well as facilitating the managers to siphon off assets in the interim.

### [20. Blockchains can cut both ways in their impact on global warming](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Blockchains can cut both ways in their impact on global warming**" published in the **Live Mint** on 21st July 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Environment and Ecology

**Relevance:** Role of Blockchain in the global warming

**News:** Recently, the Centre for Alternative Finance at the University of Cambridge has released a report consisting of the **Cambridge Bitcoin Electricity Consumption Index**. It highlights the role of **cryptocurrencies** behind global warming in the Anthropocene era.

### What are the purported reasons for the warming?

The top causes of global warming are cement construction, deforestation, fossil fuel use, etc.

However, Technologies, much like their human creators, are double-edged swords. Blockchains are also double-edged.

### How Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies are fuelling climate change?

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Bitcoin mining alone uses a lot of energy. For example, Bitcoin mining uses more energy than Belgium and Finland.

The **Bitcoin network** generates huge amounts of carbon dioxide, as much as Turkmenistan. It has been found that **Ethereum's CO2 emissions** rival New Zealand's.

Further, the **Application Specific Integrated Circuit** (ASIC) mining equipment that crypto miners use produces a colossal 36,000 tonnes of **electronic waste** every year.

The **'proof of work' algorithms** used in the cryptocurrencies which make the blockchain, **decentralized, secure** and **open**, consume vast amounts of energy. Here, 'Proof of work' is a consensus mechanism that allows miners to validate cryptocurrency transactions by deciphering increasingly complicated **mathematical puzzles**. Solving a puzzle requires **heavy computing power** and therefore uses **tremendous energy**.

### Measures Taken by the crypto industry to reduce emissions

The industry has resolved to go **carbon neutral** by 2030. Many blockchains, like Ethereum, are moving from **proof-of-work** to **proof-of-stake**, a mechanism that uses far less energy.

Other technologies like **sharding** and **non-tech methods** like carbon offsets are being used to create green crypto or green blockchains.

### So, is there a way that blockchains can actually help alleviate global warming and climate change?

(1) Blockchains can be used to **decentralize** the power system. This can be done by creating peer-to-peer electricity sharing mechanisms for local communities. It will reduce **transmission losses** and encourage an economic model to produce and consume clean power through solar, wind, biogas and other sources. For example, the **Brooklyn Microgrid Project** uses smart contracts to trade solar electricity with neighbours over a blockchain.

(2) There can be **tokenization** of electricity for power trading and donations to poorer areas. This has **incentive mechanisms** to encourage recycling of industrial and electronic waste. This can be implemented using **smart contracts** that can propel incentive mechanisms. There will be rewarded for using **ecologically sustainable practices**.

(3) The **'track-and-trace'** or **provenance property** of blockchains can be used to track environmental treaties. For example, to enforce action, decrease fraud and prevent manipulation.

(4) Blockchains can be used to track **environmental donations** and how they are being used by **non-profit entities** working in the **environmental areas**. **Start-ups** like Bitgive and Bithope are working in this space.

(5) The blockchains can help track and trace the greenhouse gases emissions, carbon credits and carbon tax mechanisms. They are being used in **global supply chains** to build efficiency and resilience. It can be used to measure and reduce the **carbon footprint** caused by them.



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### 21. [Despite pressures, the rupee's remarkable resilience](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Despite pressures, the rupee's remarkable resilience**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd July 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** To understand the performance of the Indian Rupee to the US Dollar.

**News:** The Indian rupee has depreciated by around 7% against the U.S. dollar, since the start of the year.

**Must read:** [Fall in Rupee Value: Reasons, Concerns and Solutions – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the position of the dollar and the US?

The dollar has strengthened against all currencies, developed or emerging. The consumer price index (CPI) inflation in the United States reached a multi-decade high of 9.1% in June 2022. This prompted the reversal in the monetary policy stance of the US Federal Reserve.

The rate hiking cycle by the US Federal Reserve has caused the dollar's appreciation which has led the dollar index to strengthen by over 11% in 2022 so far, taking it to a 20-year high.

**Read more:** [External vulnerabilities: Time for a rupee review](#)

What is the situation of the Indian rupee?

India's foreign exchange reserves have moderated by almost \$55 billion from a high of \$635 billion.

The rupee has fallen sharply against the dollar, but the depreciation has been relatively lower compared with past crises such as the global financial crisis of 2008 (the rupee had weakened by over 20% between December 2007-June 2009) and the [Taper Tantrum](#) of 2013 (for seven months from the start of the crisis in May 2013, the rupee had depreciated by over 11%).

What is the RBI's response to the performance of the Rupee?

**Read here:** [Why there is no reason to panic over the rupee](#)

What are the effects of a weak rupee?

**Read here:** [Explained: What Rs 80 to a dollar means](#)

What should be done to strengthen the rupee?

**Firstly**, the Government could encourage some of the large market cap companies (private and public sectors) to be included in the major global indices such as MSCI and FTSE. This will help increase the weight of Indian equities in these indices and also compensate for foreign portfolio outflows to some extent.

**Secondly**, The Government could also assist India's entry into bond indices such as J.P. Morgan's Emerging-Market Bond Index and Barclays Global Bond Index. This will **a)** Lead to forex inflows, **b)** Have a soothing impact on interest rates, **c)** Provide the central bank with the requisite ammunition in case there is further weakness.

**Read more:** [Why Weaker Rupee Isn't All Bad News](#)

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### 22. [Saving The Hills – on Aravalli Range Verdict](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Saving the Hills**” published in **The Times of India** on **23rd July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Ecology and Environment

**Relevance:** Aravalli Ranges Forest Area; National Capital Region; Natural Conservation Zone (NCZ) in NCR

**News:** The Supreme Court has given a verdict in which it declared that all land in Haryana covered under the **Punjab Land Preservation Act** will be treated as **forest land**.

#### **Significance of the judgment**

The verdict would end the false debate of **development** versus **environment**.

The verdict will protect the **Aravalli ranges, one of the oldest mountain blocks in the world**. The range also acts as the barrier against **desertification of the breadbasket of India**. The verdict has upheld the **three decades of jurisprudence** on the Aravalli range, which is a key feature of the National Capital Region (NCR).

The ruling will end decades of **reckless destruction** of the **Aravalli range**, by the real estate sector. This is validated by the fact that the three states **Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh**, which form part of the NCR, have significantly lower forest cover than the national average of 21. 7%. Further, Haryana is the lowest at 3. 6%.

#### **Consequences of the destruction of the natural ecosystem in India**

The destruction has already extracted a **large economic** and **health cost in the NCR**.

For Example, in 2013, the World Bank estimated that environmental destruction leads to an **annual cost of India’s economic degradation** of \$80 billion or 5. 7% of the GDP.

Further, the lion’s share of this cost was on **account of pollution** because the pollution results in a significant **mortality load** among adults.

### 23. [How we can have disaster-free floods](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**How we can have disaster-free floods?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Disaster Management

**Relevance:** Floods

**News:** Recently, Assam was ravaged by two bouts of floods in quick succession in the month of May and June.

#### **What were the causes behind floods in Assam?**

**Natural Causes:** Hazards like fluvial floods, are often triggered by **extreme weather events**, but they translate into disaster risk due to anthropogenic factors.

**Anthropogenic factors:** Human factors share a **complex relationship** with **biophysical** and **social vulnerability**. For example, the embankments which were meant for flood protection got breached once again. It led to severe disaster.

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### What should be done?

There is a need to turn **the seasonal flood-related crisis** into an opportunity to bring a **paradigm shift in flood management**. There is a need to move away from **hazard prevention** to the minimization of **disaster risk**, like the adoption of the **flood risk management strategies** as described below:

It would require moving away from the sole focus on preventing floods through **structural interventions** and **river engineering** like **embankment construction** to targeting factors that drive the multiple dimensions of vulnerability. It will contribute to **building people's resilience**.

### How to reduce the vulnerabilities of the communities to the flood hazard?

- 1) The **riparian population, their lives, and livelihoods** should be at the center of the planning process of flood management.
- 2) There should be **convergence across multiple departments** like the department of agriculture, animal husbandry, education, PHED, and health departments.
- 3) There should be **round-the-year mission mode developmental activities** to ensure that communities not just live with floods, but thrive despite floods. This would require a range of development interventions, including **new models of embankment management**, to improve the overall livelihood of rural people.
- 4) The early **warning systems** should be improved, as the **frequency** and **intensity** of extreme weather events will continue to increase in the coming period.
- 5) **At the community level**, every village in Assam should have access to elevated shelters which will contribute to resilience building
- 6) To address management problems, it requires **dedicated** and **trained professionals** who understand the **interdisciplinarity** required to manage flood risk and build resilience. This set of **professional cadres** could be located at the **district level**, working closely with the **District Disaster Management Agency** and **district administration** and coordinating with the various line departments.
- 7) The different **community institutions** promoted under the **National Rural Livelihoods Mission** can be trained. These institutions could act as a **response force** for the communities to calamities in disaster-prone areas.
- 8) There could be **District Disaster Management fellows**, a dedicated group of trained young professionals with a time-bound and goal-driven assignment, along the lines of fellows in the **Aspirational District Programme**.

# General

# Studies

# Paper – 4

General Studies - 4

1. [From Madras HC comments on mangalsutra to a survey in Karnataka, a troubling view of women emerges](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**From Madras HC comments on mangalsutra to a survey in Karnataka, a troubling view of women emerges**” published in the **Indian Express** on **21st July 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 4 – Role of family society and educational institutions in inculcating values and social influence and persuasion.

**Relevance:** Role of institutions on gender relations in India.

**News:** Recently, the Madras High Court’s comment on the mangalsutra and Karnataka’s survey that sought to gauge attitudes towards gender highlights the peculiar nature of gender relations in India.

What are the two instances that highlights gender relations in India?

**Madras Highcourt’s comment on Mangalsutra:** The court observed that the removal of the mangalsutra by the woman from her body amounted to “mental cruelty” towards her husband. The court also said that the mangalsutra is only removed at the death of the husband.

**Karnataka’s survey:** The survey of teachers, students and parents in Karnataka found that, **1)** Childcare is women’s responsibility, **2)** They put up with domestic violence for the “good” of the family.

What is the significance of these instances on gender relations in India?

The court’s comment **a)** Normalises ideas about inequality in family relationships, **b)** Consider a woman’s primary task is to be a good wife and display the symbols of domesticity.

Similarly, the survey highlights that a broad cross-section of society still thinks that women’s primary role is as wives and mothers.

Both instances highlight the duties of women. That is their duties are tied to their families, sons, husbands and society.

What is the role of society and institutions on gender relations in India?

The relationship between a society and its institutions is a peculiar one. The attitudes of the institutions are just a small part of the expression of social life.

The relationship between institutions and society should be one where the former shapes the latter. This is crucial for any social change. In that, the courts of law enjoy a superior position in the hierarchy of institutions.

Why do institutions need to change?

An idea is getting popular that institutions of various kinds are sacrosanct and any criticism of their functioning is considered as the absence of proper respect for society and nation. However, this is not correct.

If it is a change that one is after, then he/she needs to consider the gender of institutions. This means that the default gender of institutions should be changed to **avoid masculinity of institutions**.

How institutions can ensure gender equality?

In a society where men can marry “modern” women who must both work and look after the home, they must respect gender equality. The institutions need to ensure that others benefit from it by contributing to social welfare. They must be open to all the elements of society not alone masculinity.