

9 PM

Compilation

1st to 6th August, 2022

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General Studies Paper – 1

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General Studies - 1

1. [Hail the rise of digital humanities](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “Hail the rise of digital humanities” published in the Business Standard on 1st August 2022.

Syllabus: GS 1 Indian Art and Culture

News: Recently, the Jadavpur University has launched **the Bichitra project**, a **digital humanities project**. In this project, digital versions of manuscripts and printed books and journals related to Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali with English transcription have been gathered for study.

About the Digital Humanities

In this, the “digital world” and “humanities” are combined together to produce anything meaningful.

Nowadays, the digital humanists have developed new methods, such as **computer-based statistical analysis, search and retrieval, topic modelling**, and **data visualisation** for use in their researches.

Some Applications

A key element in spurring growth in digital humanities is the collection and digitisation of large datasets that will enable researchers to experiment.

(1) At the University of California, Berkeley, researchers are using **mathematical techniques** and **machine learning-based tools** to unravel which author contributed what to the Hebrew Bible, a composite text compiled over hundreds of years.

(2) in the University College London, researchers are using similar **mathematical techniques, text- and sentiment-mining techniques** on digitized newspapers and available periodicals. It is to unravel the history of mentalities, long-term developments, and turning points in public debates.

(3) Further, mathematical methods are being used in news headlines, social media posts, and smart stock market traders on Wall Street and other financial markets to extract emotions.

Importance of the digital humanities

The Digital humanities techniques are applied to archives and collections that are so large that any human researcher or research group cannot comfortably handle them.

These methods enable ambitious projects with large interdisciplinary teams to work on difficult or complex projects.

Digital humanists are transforming the idea of what a **humanities research project** can be. These techniques are giving humanists, new ways of seeing past and present cultures.

Some Developments in the field of digital humanities

In the Western Countries

Major Western universities have started setting up digital humanities departments and research centers. For Example, **the Digital Humanities Centre** at Berkeley; Massachusetts Institute of

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Technology's Digital Humanities and Literature Research Initiative; the University of Cambridge's new M Phil in digital humanities, and Oxford University's M.Sc. in digital scholarship.

In India

Ashoka University has initiated foundation courses in digital humanities and seminars for exploring critical thinking and opportunities for interdisciplinary majors.

IIT Jodhpur, Mumbai University, and Jadavpur University are offering post-graduate diplomas in digital humanities.

The Centre for Internet and Governance in India, Bangalore, is also playing a pioneering role in spreading the word.

What are the challenges in the adoption of the digital humanities in India?

In India, even relatively minor updates of curricula are greeted with **temper tantrums** by the teachers concerned, even at the IIM level. In part, this arises because such changes require professors and lecturers in their late 50s and early 60s to unlearn and relearn new concepts. For example, it happened when the Internet and the World Wide Web started to make their presence in the 2000-2010 period.

The Indian tech companies may convert the still nascent concepts in digital humanities into **learn-by-rote formulae**. It will further block any Indian participation in this new intellectual revolution that is underway.

2. [A translation revolution for an inclusive, prosperous India](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**A translation revolution for an inclusive, prosperous India**" published in the **Indian Express** on **3rd August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 1 Indian Art and Culture

Relevance: The National Language Translation Missions

News: Recently, the **Artificial Intelligence for Bharat (AI4Bharat) Centre** at IIT Madras was established with support from Rohini and Nandan Nilekani, and Microsoft. It aims to **bring Indian languages, to parity with respect to English in AI technologies, with open-source contributions in datasets, models, and apps**.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has launched the **National Language Translation Mission**. Under the mission, the government launched **Bhashini platform**, which is a language translation ecosystem based on the application of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**.

The platform would align central ministries, state governments, big tech companies, start-ups, publishers, universities, NGOs, and citizens.

Some developments related to the translation revolution in India

Around 100+ models of language translation have been uploaded into **Bhashini's Universal Language Contribution API (ULCA)**, and the **Bhasha Daan** (Creating datasets by crowdsourcing).

Some models created include **IndicBERT** (a language model in 12 languages), **IndicTrans** (translation model used by India's Supreme Court), **IndicXlit** (transliteration model in 20

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languages), **IndicWav2Vec** (speech-recognition model), and **IndicBART** (language generation model).

What is the significance of the translation revolution in India?

India is rich in linguistic diversity. For Example, there are 22 official languages, newspapers in 35 languages, and 1,200 languages spoken in India. This diversity is a treasure chest of Indian knowledge which remains locked so far.

The Indian national movement's operating units were organized **around language** rather than British administration units like Madras Presidency, United Provinces, Bombay Presidency, etc. These units contributed to Indian Independence.

The translation revolution **will expand the global knowledge base**, unlock Indian treasures for every Indian, and raise the share of the internet in Indian languages.

It would provide a better and more effective communication medium for Indian society.

For example, it would enable a webinar being held in the Hindi language that could be heard live by a participant in Tamil. Further, a book published in the English language could simultaneously be available in 22 Indian languages.

What are the challenges of the translation revolution?

As per Vladimir Nabokov's 1941 essay, there are three sources of evil in translation — ignorance, laziness, and prejudice.

There are limitations of translation by software based on uniquely human skills and emotions.

What should be done?

(1) It should be ensured that the translation technology should assist the translators, **not replace them.**

(2) It should be understood that languages are **not a collection of words** but living, breathing organisms holding the connections of a culture. For example, Himachal Pradesh's 16 languages have 200 words for snow.

(3) While focusing on language translation between **Indian languages**, the government should not forget **English** as a link language, scale tool, and software vehicle. The reasons for the inclusion of English are:

(a) In 1919, Gandhiji wrote an article in **Young India** suggesting that real education was impossible through a foreign medium.

(b) B R Ambedkar supported the adoption of English in the Constituent Assembly debates because it was equidistant from all communities and would blunt traditional advantages.

(c) English is a vocational skill that creates labor mobility, wage premiums and resumes signaling.

(d) The translation to **English** can raise the viability of regional publishers, regional language writers, and regional language translators. For example, **Geetanjali Shree** has won the Booker Prize for her English translation of the Hindi novel, *Ret Samadhi*

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3. [Reaping the demographic dividend](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Reaping the demographic dividend**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Population and associated issues.

Relevance: About the recent UNPD report on population.

News: [World Population Prospects 2022](#) forecasts that the world’s population will touch eight billion this year and rise to 9.8 billion in 2050.

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

About China’s population policy

A long-time critic of China’s population policy believes that without the one-child policy, China’s population would have naturally risen and peaked at 1.6 billion in 2040. This would allow them to reap a much longer “demographic dividend.”

At the present policy by 2050, China will have only 1.3 billion people, of whom 500 million will be past the age of 60.

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

About the demographic dividend in India

In contrast, India’s population would have peaked at 1.7 billion, of whom only 330 million will be 60 years or older. India is getting a demographic dividend that will last nearly 30 years.

Deloitte’s Deloitte Insights (in 2017) expects “India’s potential workforce to rise from 885 million to “1.08 billion people over the next two decades from today.” The insights contends that “the next 50 years will be an Indian summer that redraws the face of global economic power.”

McKinsey & Company’s report, ‘India at Turning Point’ (in 2020) suggested how India can “create \$2.5 trillion of economic value in 2030 and support 112 million jobs, or about 30% of the non-farm workforce in 2030.” These include digitisation and automation, shifting supply chains, urbanisation, rising incomes and demographic shifts, and a greater focus on sustainability, health, and safety are accelerating.

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

How do India and China reap their demographic dividends?

India today is compared to China, the only country it can be reasonably compared to. The Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution in China fuelled China’s growth for decades.

The IT technologies in India have matured exponentially. Now the IR can revolutionise learning and transform Indian society at an astonishingly low cost.

India does not have a Hukou system which in China attaches rural folk to rural parts creating a deep divide between urban China. But the Hukou system disincentivises migration to urban areas. For instance, only about 36% of China’s overall population is urban.

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

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What India should do to reap its demographic dividend?

The major challenges in reaping demographic dividend are **a)** India's bad infrastructure, **b)** poorly skilled workforce that will impede growth. Hence, India should focus on both.

India needs to invest massively in quality schools and higher education as well as healthcare.

India must seize the moment and not be incremental in its approach.

4. [A century back is not as long ago as it may seem](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**A century back is not as long ago as it may seem**" published in the **Live Mint** on **5th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS-1, World and Modern India History

Context: The article compares the events of the same year of the previous century i.e. 1922 with the year of the present century i.e. 2022.

Over a period of hundred years, **various things have changed**. For instance, since 1922, industry, telephony, media, medicine, trade, communication, science, entertainment, travel, and even the climate have changed.

However, over the same period of time, since 1922, various things have stayed the same. For example,

(1) The public health crises continue to linger. For example, **the Spanish Flu Epidemic** hit the world **in 1918**, and **the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2021**. And now another health crisis, monkeypox, has come up to haunt the world.

(2) In 1922, the revolution's architect Vladimir Lenin fell ill and his **comrade Josef Stalin** rose to power. Stalin deviated from Lenin's grand plan of a **federal union of states**, which had envisaged devolution of power to satellite states, and created **a centralized Union of Soviet Socialist Republics**. However, such a central control has been re-established in Russia in the last few years. For example, the invasion of Crimea and Ukraine.

(3) The then Weimar Germany was facing **hyperinflation**, resulting in massive unemployment and general impoverishment. Adolf Hitler leveraged economic distress and became the undisputed leader of the Nazi party. Nowadays, the world is facing high inflation and commodity prices.

(4) Mahatma Gandhi pleaded guilty to a charge of sedition for his writings. He said **Section 124A** is "perhaps the prince among political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen."

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5. [Why India needs to stop participating in commonwealth games](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **“Why India needs to stop participating in Commonwealth Games”** published in the **Indian Express** on **6th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 1 History; History of Modern India; G2 International Relations; Bilateral Relations

Relevance: Colonial Power; Neo-colonialism

News: The 2022 edition of the Commonwealth Games is being held in Birmingham, UK and athletes from 72 nations and territories are participating in the sports event.

History of Commonwealth Games (CWG)

Queen Elizabeth is the head of the Commonwealth. The CWGs are part of the Commonwealth. The CWGs were once known as the British Empire Games (BEG). Later on, it came to be known as the **British Empire and Commonwealth Games**. Further, it was renamed **the British Commonwealth Games**.

What is wrong with the very idea of the Commonwealth Games (CWG)?

Historical Reasons

The 72 nations and territories that are participating in the **2022 edition of the Commonwealth Games, were** once colonized by the British. As a result of this colonization, Britain took our wealth and led to the impoverishment of colonies like India. Hence, our “commonwealth” is now British wealth.

The natives of these colonies were subjugated, civilized, and then disciplined with devices like the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

From **India’s perspective**, as per some experts, the **East India Company** and **the British Raj** siphoned out nearly \$44.6 trillion from India over a rough period of 200 years, i.e., 1765 to 1938, etc.

As per the experts, India’s **per capita consumption of food grains** went down from 200 kg in 1900 to 157 kg on the eve of the Second World War. The major reason for the impoverishment of India can be owed to the **British practices of greedy taxation**. For example, The British East India Company first got revenue collecting rights in Bengal in 1765, and it promptly tripled the tax revenue from Bengal. Thus, Bengal faced a massive famine in 1770.

During WWII, Former British PM Winston Churchill’s **wartime colonial policies** resulted in the Bengal famine of 1943. India was forced to pay for British defense expenditure, above what was already paid in peacetime. Further, the British kept presses in India working overtime to print Indian rupees during this time, pushing up inflation and making food more expensive in India.

Contemporary reasons

In 2019, when the then **British Prime Minister Theresa May**, was pressed in parliament to apologize to colonies, on the country’s behalf, she expressed her “regrets” but refused to apologize.

Further, Britain has established a **terrible immigration policy**, which intertwines with its colonial past.

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In the Commonwealth, the **closest relationships** with Britain are still enjoyed by the settler countries, where British citizens went to settle. For Example, Australia, Canada & New Zealand.

What should be done?

The government should establish a museum to memorialize the grief and loss during British rule on lines of those already present. Like a private museum to Partition in Amritsar, and a memorial to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

The government should commission the writing of a good economics textbook that can teach our young about the **colonial-era impoverishment of India**.

The government and sports ministry should support participation in other games and contests.

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General Studies Paper – 2

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General Studies - 2

1. [International North South Transport Corridor \(INSTC\): Bringing Eurasia closer](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Bringing Eurasia closer**” published in **The Hindu** on **1st August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Relevance: About the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

News: Recently, two 40-ft containers of wood laminate sheets from Russia’s Astrakhan port crossed the Caspian Sea and eventually reach Nhava Shiva port in Mumbai. The journey signalled the launch of the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

What is INSTC?

It is a 7,200-km multi-modal transport corridor that combines road, rail and maritime routes connecting Russia and India via Central Asia and Iran. The corridor is expected to consolidate the emerging Eurasian Free Trade Area.

The legal framework for the INSTC is provided by a trilateral agreement signed by India, Iran and Russia at the Euro-Asian Conference on Transport in 2000.

Read here: [“INSTC | International North-South Corridor”](#)

What is the significance of INSTC?

1) The INSTC is expected to **reduce freight costs** by 30% and the **journey time** by 40% in comparison with the conventional deep sea route via the Suez Canal, This is significant as a container ship was stuck in the Suez last year, halting maritime traffic between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, **2)** INSTC **can shape a north-south transport corridor** that can **complement the east-west axis** of the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Read more: [India and Central Asia](#)

What is the significance of INSTC to India?

1) India can now **bypass Pakistan to access Afghanistan, central Asia** and beyond, **2)** The infrastructure will **allow India’s access to Afghanistan and Central Asia**, **3)** A special economic zone around Chabahar will **offer Indian companies the opportunity to set up a range of industries**; for example, NALCO proposes to set up an aluminium smelter.

Read more: [India – Central Asia Relations – Explained, pointwise](#)

What does India’s engagement in INSTC and Quad signify?

India’s founding role in both the INSTC and the Quad exemplifies its **departure from non-alignment to multi-alignment**.

The INSTC offers a platform for India to closely collaborate with Russia, Iran and Central Asian republics. INSTC’s major players Russia and Iran are subject to sanctions by Western governments.

On the other hand, Quad members of the U.S., Japan and Australia aim to create and safeguard a free and open Indo-Pacific.

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Overall, the INSTC is a laudable initiative as a transcontinental multi-modal corridor that aims to bring Eurasia closer together. Further, India's membership in INSTC consolidates India's multi-alignment strategy.

Read more: [Quad Leaders' Summit – Explained, pointwise](#)

2. [Representation, all the way up](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Representation, all the way up”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **1st August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein.

Relevance: Local Self Government; Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs)

News: Recently, Droupadi Murmu, an Adivasi woman from a humble background, was sworn in as **the 15th President of India**. It has become possible due to various constitutional reforms after independence. The article highlights some major reforms and analyses them.

The **73rd and 74th Amendments** towards **democratic decentralisation** has played a key role in diversifying representation in politics.

Merits of the Constitutional Reform

The reforms mandated the creation of rural and urban local governments with functions, funds, and functionaries. It enabled them to function as **“institutions of self-government”** at the local level across the country. These reforms were aimed to meet the **stated ends of economic development and social justice**.

These amendments signaled a realisation of a long-held vision of Mahatma Gandhi and his followers to make the village the core unit of governance.

These reforms have provided **Intersectional reservation**, which refers to reservation for SC Women, ST Women and OBC Women. It mandates the **reservation of seats** to members belonging to the **Scheduled Castes (SCs)** and **STs**, in the **elected councils** of Panchayats and Municipalities. Further, a minimum of one-third of seats have to be reserved for women.

Such reservation has succeeded in broadening the **representative character** of the Indian state by increasing the total number of elected representatives and diversifying its constituents.

In fact, some states have gone beyond the Constitutional mandate by increasing women's reservations from 33% to 50% and introducing reservations for OBCs.

Issues in the local-self-governance

Despite 30 years of these constitutional reforms, the local governments have still not become powerful “units of self-government”. The reasons include:

- (1) There are issues in the design and the implementation of the Constitutional Amendments.
- (2) The expansion of the reservation to other social bases has been relatively ignored in academic and policy debates.

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(3) The judiciary has been quite sceptical about **diversifying representation** in local governments, like OBC reservation in local government elections.

The Judiciary has upheld various amendments that prescribed **educational qualifications** for contesting local body elections on the ground that it is for the **“better administration of the panchayats”**.

(4) Some believe that reservations in local governments do not substantially benefit the marginalised groups. For example, women are sometimes proxies for their husbands in reserved constituencies.

What should be done?

Empirical studies have shown that **women-led panchayats** invest more in public goods, prioritize infrastructure more relevant for women, and increase women’s involvement in village affairs.

The SC has given direction that diversifying reservations to OBC should be justified by “empirical findings” of backwardness.

3. [Central bank autonomy and its crypto plot twist](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **“Central bank autonomy and its crypto lot twist”** published in the Live Mint on 31st July 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 Issues and Challenges pertaining to the growth and development of the Indian Economy

News: At present, there are arguments that the Central banks should have functional autonomy to target their aim of country’s financial stability and development.

Situations at present – The loss of autonomy of the central banks in India

Nowadays, the liberty of the central banks is bounded under the **legal mandate**. **For example**, in 2016, the Reserve Bank of India was given a mandate to keep inflation within in particular range. Therefore, there is a special panel to decide the monetary rate policy, in which the government’s appointees also play important role.

Further, the RBI-Centre relations went through a rocky patch around the time of demonetization.

Last year, RBI’s target band was renewed till the end of 2025-26. However, there are elections in 2024 which might impact it.

What are the arguments for more autonomy to central banks?

First, we can look at the example of the US. US Federal Reserve has autonomy in decision making. It is not forced to make price stability, its top priority and can take the decisions on the basis of long-term benefit to the economy.

Second, separation of powers based on expertise is seen to maximize public welfare. It is being followed in many other countries as well.

Third, at present, most of the economies are the crypto disruption. Central banks must make serious policy efforts the strengthen their currencies.

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What are the arguments against more autonomy to the Central bank?

One, all policies in a democracy must stay accountable to people via elected governments; and

Second, since **monetary** and **fiscal policies** do not work in isolation. They work in tandem, especially in times of crisis. Therefore, the bank's relations with the government or treasury mustn't go awry.

4. [Working towards animal health](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Working towards animal health**" published in **The Hindu** on **2nd August 2022**.

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

Relevance: To understand the concept of animal health.

News: COVID-19 have put the spotlight on the need to create greater collaborations and synergies between research on human health and animal health.

Why does India need to focus on animal health?

Increased animal husbandry: India has a livestock population of 1.6 billion and approximately 280 million farmers rely on livestock and related industries for livelihood. In the current atmosphere of climate change and unpredictable weather, animal husbandry assumes significance as a source of reliable income for farmers.

In India, the annual outbreak of zoonotic diseases translates into an estimated annual loss of \$12 billion to the economy.

The volume of Trade: The dairy industry in the country is valued at \$160 billion, while the meat industry is valued at \$50 billion.

Protection of Wildlife: Livestock and related activities have significant overlap with wildlife and humans.

Increase in Zoonotic disease: The world witnessed around 9,580 instances of disease outbreaks from 2000 to 2010, of which 60% of diseases were zoonotic in nature.

Hence, even though animal diseases do not affect human health directly, they are responsible for huge consequences to farmers, exports and gross domestic product (GDP) growth nationally.

Read more: [Union Minister inaugurates India's first ever Animal Health Summit](#)

What are the challenges in addressing animal health?

a) Health policies are **largely been human-centric**, leaving a large unaddressed gap for diseases of pandemic potential in animals, **b)** Synergies from advances in human vaccines have not been leveraged in animal vaccine development.

Read more: [Unite human, animal and environmental health to prevent the next pandemic – UN Report](#)

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How India is promoting animal health?

Firstly, **the department of Animal Husbandry** has been working towards increased investment in preparedness to protect health and building economic resilience so that India could become a world leader in animal pandemic preparedness.

Secondly, the **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD)** has set up a dedicated **'One Health Unit'** in collaboration with the Gates Foundation. One of the primary focus areas of the unit is to **create an "animal pandemic preparedness" model** by creating a mechanism for storage and seamless exchange of data and information on livestock health. This will be implemented through the **National Digital Livestock Mission (NDLM)**.

The benefits of a successful model are, **a)** Seamless coordination with critical ecosystem partners to ensure the timely and successful development of animal drugs and vaccines, **b)** Enable the linking and comparison of real-time information regarding diseases between wildlife and human systems, **c)** A reliable mechanism for forecasting disease outbreaks, and **d)** Present a good starting point to lead global pandemic preparedness effort because this is faced by other countries as well.

Thirdly, Companies can now avail of incentives for setting up or expansion of animal vaccines and related infrastructure under the **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Fund**.

Fourthly, DAHD in collaboration with the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), and others has **set up an Empowered Committee for Animal Health** to streamline the animal health regulatory ecosystem in the country.

Read more: [Govt plans 'One Health' to check antibiotics use in animals, humans](#)

Close collaboration is needed between veterinary science and human health experts to forge effective tools for pandemic preparedness.

5. [The powerful and ubiquitous ED](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"The powerful and ubiquitous ED"** published in the **Indian Express** on **2nd August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies..

Relevance: To understand the increasing powers of central agencies.

News: Now a days central agencies have taken over the investigation of sensational cases which were once done by state police forces. Now, only the [Enforcement Directorate \(ED\)](#), National Investigation Agency (NIA), [Central Bureau of Investigation \(CBI\)](#), Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), are in the limelight.

Among them ED became a prime agency following the enactment of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in 2002. Recently, the Supreme Court also acknowledged the ED's sweeping powers under the PMLA.

What increased the powers of the central agencies?

Over the past few years, major amendments in key Acts have given teeth to central agencies. These agencies have the mandate for investigations across the country and are not bound by any jurisdictions.

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This made the central agencies as big brothers of investigations, while state and city police forces function in their shadows with limited powers and jurisdictions.

The NIA, CBI, NCB, and other central investigative agencies now investigating high-profile cases. For instance, the Aryan Khan drug case and the drug nexus investigation in the Sushant Singh Rajput case by the NCB. Investigations in the Antilia case by the NIA.

Must read: [The functioning of the Enforcement Directorate](#)

What is the status of ED?

The ED is the **only central investigative agency that does not require permission from the government** or any authority to summon or prosecute politicians or government officials for inquiry into economic offences and financial crimes like money laundering.

Raids conducted by the ED between 2014 and 2022 had jumped 27 times as compared to the raids conducted during 2004-2014. Between 2004 and 2014 the number of ED raids was 114, which, in the period between 2014 and 2022, in a span of just eight years, increased to 3,010.

Read more: [How Enforcement Directorate \(ED\) became so powerful?](#)

The increased role of central agencies made the City and state police forces suffer a major loss of reputation. Mumbai Police, once considered second only to Scotland Yard has not had the same fame anymore.

6. [Where's that law?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Where's That Law?” Published in **The Times of India** on 2nd August 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 Important Provisions of the Constitution of India; Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Relevance: Fundamental Right to Privacy

News: In May, The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) issued an advisory warning against sharing Aadhaar numbers with unauthorized entities.

What are the issues related to privacy in India?

Five years ago, the SC ruled the **right to privacy** as a **fundamental right**. However, there is a **statutory vacuum** in the laws related to privacy. India doesn't have a **data protection law**.

However, the **Sri Krishna committee** was constituted to make recommendations on the data protection law. Consequently, the GOI introduced **the Personal Data Protection Bill 2019**. But the government didn't conform to these recommendations and gave the government, sweeping exemptions from privacy norms. The government was endowed with powers to overrule the proposed **Data Protection Authority**, reducing it largely to an appendage rather than an independent regulator.

Civil society was worried about these exemptions, as these give space to the government to undermine privacy.

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The **joint committee of Parliament** examining the Bill noted that it is difficult to distinguish between **personal** and **non-personal data**.

There are incidents of theft of data from public and private agencies collecting biometric information like fingerprints. **For example**, people have lost money from bank accounts due to Aadhar.

There are also threats like the **Pegasus malware** that infects mobile phones.

There is opacity in the **data collection operations** of tech companies.

What should be done?

With the era of 5G and ever-**greater sharing of data** between smart devices, and coming big jumps in computing power, there is a dire need for the **data protection law** in India.

Such a law is urgently needed to clarify the **ownership, storage, and processing of personal data** collected by public and private entities.

The law will codify the responsibilities and liabilities of these entities.

7. [Key lessons from public-private efforts will help us eliminate TB](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Key lessons from public-private efforts will help us eliminate TB**" published in the **Business Standard** on 2nd August 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Relevance: Reforms in delivery of public health services

News: In the recent period, the central and state governments have engaged with the private sector in different **disease areas**, particularly TB. Because the private sector has the potential of providing **disruptive innovation** for serving the public health goals of the Central and State governments in India.

Some private sector engagement programs

(1) The Private-Provider Interface Agency (PPIA): It was implemented in Mumbai in Maharashtra, Patna in Bihar, and Mehsana in Gujarat. The agency worked with a network of private doctors, chemists, laboratories, and hospitals to ensure that **TB diagnosis** and treatment practices adhere to the prescribed '**Standards of TB Care**' in India.

As a result of the implementation of the PPIA program in Mumbai and Patna, there was a 351% and 532% increase in TB case notifications from the private sector, between 2014 and 2018. The actual reporting of cases resulted in a greater understanding of the TB burden on the ground.

(2) The Patient-Provider Support Agency (PPSA) model: The government has expanded the PPP model to the **PPSA model**. The government's annual TB report tells us that **PPSA programs** have now been scaled up and launched in more than 170 districts across India.

(3) Others: Under the **Chiranjeevi Yojana program**, the Gujarat government is engaging with **private providers** to increase institutional deliveries. Under the **Hausala Sajheedari initiative**, the UP government is engaging private health facilities for family planning. The scheme works on a reimbursement basis under a **public-private partnership (PPP) model**

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Potential to engage private players for Tuberculosis (TB)

The National Prevalence Survey talks about the actual burden of TB in India and health-seeking behaviors in the public and private sectors.

According to the survey, almost half of all patients with **TB symptoms** seek care in the private sector.

Some key challenges in the implementation of the PPSA Programme.

(1) First, there have been cases of **unstandardized care** in the private sector that led to treatment delays, thus contributing to the emergence of **drug-resistant TB** and increased **mortality**. For example, as per a 2019 study, it was estimated that a **symptomatic patient** approached **multiple private healthcare providers**. Therefore, up to 65 days were taken before an accurate diagnosis.

(2) The **state and district administration** will find it difficult to implement the PPSA because it is a new approach for the implementers.

(3) At present, very few non-government organizations (NGOs) apply for PPSA because information on such contracting isn't easily visible or is difficult to understand.

What should be done?

(1) The state and district administration need to be **convinced** and **encouraged** to support and implement the PPSA model across their region. For this, effort should be taken for their **capacity building** and hand-holding support should be given to the state and district administrators. For this, state technical support units (STSUs) have already been established in some states.

(2) The **tendering process** should be expanded and advertised to allow diverse organizations in this segment to apply for consideration as PPSAs.

(3) The government can adopt the model of **output-based financing** for PPSAs. The PPSAs should be paid from ensuring notifications to conducting advanced diagnostic tests, HIV-diabetes testing, etc.

(4) The government can explore the applications of these models in various government initiatives such as the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** in case of difficult-to-treat forms of TB, such as extra-pulmonary TB, etc.

(5) The **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**, can help in achieving universal health coverage, quality healthcare for all, and also eliminating **Tuberculosis (TB)**. This program aims to digitize the country's healthcare ecosystem and to enable the creation of an enabling ecosystem for fostering public-private collaborations.

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8. [India and Switzerland's deepening partnership](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**India and Switzerland's deepening partnership**" published in the **Indian Express** on **2nd August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 International Relations; bilateral Relationship

Relevance: India-Switzerland Relations

News: At present, Switzerland's State Secretary in charge of Switzerland's Foreign Policy is on an official visit to India.

India-Switzerland Relationship

Diplomatic relation: India and Switzerland signed **the Treaty of Friendship** in 1948 in New Delhi. Therefore, both countries are going to commemorate the 75th anniversary of our friendship next year.

Science and Technological relation: Both are collaborating on digital transformation, sustainability, health, life sciences, MedTech, infrastructure, cleantech, fintech, blockchain, AI, and robotics.

Trade and Commerce relation: Innovation and investment continue to be the **primary drivers** of bilateral relations. Switzerland is the **12th largest investor** in India. There are about **100 Swiss companies** which are manufacturing locally and supporting the **Make in India initiative** of India.

Potential areas of cooperation

There is enormous **bilateral economic potential**. **For example**, trade talks between Switzerland (as part of the European Free Trade Association EFTA) and India are high on the priority list.

Switzerland is one of the **most innovative countries** and also the home of **world-leading technology companies**. Therefore, Switzerland seeks to engage with India, the leader of the **industry 4.0 revolution**, in areas ranging from digital governance to digital self-determination.

Both Switzerland and India may work together to address **climate change** and its impact on **security**.

There are convergences in Swiss and Indian priorities at the UN **Security Council**. Switzerland has been elected as a **non-permanent member** of the UNSC and desires to make the UNSC, an effective institution through the process of **greater transparency** as well as **accountability**. On similar lines, India has also been advocating for similar reform in the United Nations Security Council.

Both countries are committed to a robust and **effective multilateral system**. With reliable voices, both countries can together contribute to the global good.

Both countries have a **convergence** of the shared **democratic values** and **foreign policy independence**.

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9. [India's response to Sri Lanka and Myanmar crises is a study in contrast. It shouldn't be](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "India's response to Sri Lanka and Myanmar crises is a study in contrast. It shouldn't be" published in the Indian Express on 2nd August 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 International Relations; Bilateral Relations, etc.

Relevance: India-Myanmar Relations

News: On 1 August 2022, Myanmar is going to mark 18 months of the military coup in the country.

Status of Humanitarian Crisis in Myanmar

According to **UN human rights monitors**, over 2,000 people have been killed, and around 14,000 are in prison, including 90 lawmakers. Furthermore, over 7,00,000 are refugees, and half a million are internally displaced.

The contrast between the Indian response to the crisis in Sri Lanka and the dawning civil war in Myanmar could not be starker.

India's response to Myanmar Crisis

Unlike India's response to Sri Lanka, wherein it has extended \$3.5 billion in credits and supplied essential fuel, India's response to the Myanmar crisis is starkly different in various ways:

- (1) The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has refused entry to Myanmar's refugees.
- (2) Further, the Union administration has also not supported the Mizoram government's aid effort to refugees.
- (3) It has been reported that India's **Bharat Electronics Limited** (BEL) is supplying remote air defense and coastal surveillance equipment to the Junta regime.

Response of other countries

Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN); It took mediation with the Junta. The Junta has agreed to a **five-point consensus** with the regional grouping. It includes an immediate end to violence and a resumption of negotiations between the ousted administration and the Tatmadaw.

The US, EU, Australia, and Canada have announced targeted sanctions on the junta, and the EU imposed an embargo on arms sales to the country.

The international community has not recognized the **National Unity Government** as the legitimate successor of Myanmar's pre-coup elected administration. Also, none of the Asian countries has stepped up to support the **National unity government** and the **People's Defence Force (PDF)**.

Even when the National unity government and PDS find funds to buy arms, their access is blocked. For example, **Bangladesh** and **Thailand** do not allow arms to cross to the resistance.

The UN Security Council has called for an arms embargo. However, it is mostly acting against the unity government and the PDF.

Both **Russia** and **China** continue to provide arms to the junta. Now, both countries are the top arms exporters to the Tatmadaw post-coup.

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What are the factors that demand India to work towards the restoration of democracy in Myanmar?

Although India-Myanmar shares land and sea borders. India has faced a troubled history of **cross-border insurgencies**. And successive Indian administrations have maintained relations with the junta in the hope that they would cooperate against **cross-border Indian armed groups**. But these insurgencies have mostly petered out in the recent past. Therefore, India can work towards the restoration of our neighbour's democracy.

In Mizoram, the Mizo people are distressed with the **junta's attack** on **Myanmar's elected administration**. They wish that the Union government of India must show compassion towards Myanmar's people and also extend active support to the **National Unity Government** that formed post-coup.

What should be done?

China and Russia should stop arming the Tatmadaw. It can help a return to some kind of limited power-sharing.

One way in which Myanmar can regain democracy is if the junta is defeated. The 2008 Constitution of Myanmar mandates that around **20% of legislative seats** should be reserved for the military.

All Myanmar's neighbours need to unite together to put sanctions on the Junta government, especially nations such as Japan, Australia, and India that are members of the Quad along with the US.

10. [Making sense of the 'freebies' issue](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Making sense of the 'freebies' issue"** published in **The Hindu** on **3rd August 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, Prime Minister warned youth not to get carried away by the 'revari culture', where votes are sought by promising 'freebies'.

In another instance, while hearing a PIL, the Chief Justice of India remarked that 'freebies' were a serious issue and asked the Central government to take a stand on the need to control the announcement of 'freebies' by political parties during election campaigns.

The Court also suggested that the Finance Commission could be involved to look into the matter and propose solutions.

What are freebies?

In general, Freebies are a **waste of resources and place a burden on already stressed fiscal resources**. For instance, free distribution of goods such as televisions and gold chains. Ironically the definition also includes free or subsidised rations under the [Public Distribution System \(PDS\)](#), cooked meals under the mid-day meal scheme, Work payments under MGNREGA also come under freebies.

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

Foodgrain distribution

Pre-Pandemic: In the mid-2000s, state governments started expanding coverage and reducing the prices of PDS products. Lower prices in the PDS became electoral issues in the southern States. This ultimately led to the [National Food Security Act](#) being passed by Parliament unanimously in 2013. The NFSA expanded the coverage of the PDS to about two-thirds of the population.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been studies which showed the poverty-reducing effect of the PDS. Subsidised foodgrains distributed under the PDS not only contribute to ensuring basic food security but also act as an implicit income transfer allowing the poor to afford commodities that they otherwise could not.

The products under PDS are procured at minimum support prices (MSPs) from farmers. It is one of the main instruments of support to farmers.

During Pandemic: The Prime Minister has repeatedly campaigned about the Government implementing the 'world's largest food security programme' by distributing free foodgrain, through the [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana \(PMGKAY\)](#) to around 80 crore ration cardholders.

The scheme kept many away from the brink of starvation during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Read more: [From freebies to welfare](#)

What is the performance of other schemes?

[MGNREGA](#) has been another scheme which has been a lifeline for many during the pandemic and earlier. At a time when there are few employment opportunities, working under MGNREGA can guarantee some assured wages.

Similarly, [mid-day meals](#) in schools have been proven to contribute to increased enrolment and retention in schools and addressing classroom hunger.

Schemes such as old age, single women and disabled pensions, community kitchens in urban areas, free uniforms and textbooks for children in government schools, and free health-care services play a critical role in providing social security and access to basic entitlements.

Why these should not be considered freebies?

Calling the above schemes 'freebies' will make a view that the poor are unproductive and dependent on charity. Hence, it is important to recognise that most welfare schemes contribute to improving human development outcomes, which also results in higher economic growth in future.

How rich is getting freebies?

Around ₹1 lakh crore is the revenue forgone annually as a result of 'major tax incentives for corporate tax payers'. Corporate tax rates have been reducing and Budget documents show that in 2019-20, the effective tax rate (tax-to-profit ratio) declined as profits increased.

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The freebies that the rich get all the time through low tax rates and exemptions are considered 'incentives' instead of freebies. Hence, the government need to view both rich and poor alike in democratic India.

11. [Efficacy of RTI Act is threatened by opacity, opposition from bureaucracy and lawmakers](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Efficacy of RTI Act is threatened by opacity, opposition from bureaucracy and lawmakers**” published in **Indian Express** on **3rd August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Governance – Transparency – RTI

News: The [Right to Information Act \(RTI\)](#) is set to complete 17 years in the upcoming months. Sarthak Nagrik Sangathan (SNS) 2021 report's findings highlight the issues associated with the Act.

SNS 2021 report states that Information Commissions are acting as a major bottleneck in the effective implementation of the RTI Law.

What are the associated issues with Information Commissions?

1. Huge vacancies
2. Poor choice of commissioners,
- 3. Untrained staff** and a non-cooperative set of public information officers (PIOs)
4. Increasing opacity in the working of the commissions.
5. In many cases, **PIOs have been found non-compliant** with the orders of even commissioners. **For example**, in Madhya Pradesh, an arrest warrant was issued against one PIO after the violations of 38 summons for appearing in a hearing and non-compliance with the commissioner's orders.
6. Any serious RTI query or query, which involves more than one department, requires the intervention of high officials. However, it is found that even in such cases, **junior rank PIOs attend the hearing and face the consequences** of any issues in that case.
7. Many commissioners have been seen openly expressing their **political inclinations**. It creates a sense of bias among the petitioners.
8. RTI Act clearly states that the final appeal lies with the information commissions. However, appeal against the commissioner's orders are **masked as writ petitions**. Supreme Court, in the case, **DDA vs Skipper Construction (P) Ltd** highlighted this issue. SC stated

“High Courts must resist the temptation to exercise their writ jurisdiction in order to correct errors made by the SICs/CICs. If the High Court quashes a CIC/SIC order, it must categorically find that the order was without jurisdiction or palpably erroneous.”

What are the issues arising due to the inefficiency of Information Commissions?

A huge backlog of second appeals. As on June 30, 2021, 2.56 lakh appeals were pending with 26 information commissions in the country.

Lengthy wait time for hearings.

Hesitancy in posting penalties for non-compliance.

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Inexperience and unprofessionalism of PIOs is life-threatening to the whistle-blowers. In India, 99 RTI activists have lost their lives, 180 assaulted and 187 were threatened since 2006, as per the reports of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI).

What should be done?

First, a code of conduct must be evolved for the central and state information commissioners to keep them away from any political influence.

Second, raising awareness for RTI among the people.

Third, a strong political system is a must for the RTI regime to flourish.

12. [Costs of delayed justice](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Costs of delayed justice**” published in the **Business Standard** on **2nd August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2, Functioning of the Indian Judiciary

Relevance: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Indian Judiciary

News: Recently, The Prime Minister of India spoke at the first all-India legal district services authorities meeting in Delhi.

PM's Remarks about the issues in the Indian Judicial System

He referred to the poor state of affairs of the **under-trial prisoners** languishing in Indian jails.

He referred to the inhuman conditions of overcrowded Indian jails, an issue which was also raised by indebted businessman Vijay Mallya in a British court.

Other issues

Although, the Supreme Court had mandated the release of under-trial prisoners who had been incarcerated for 10 years without being convicted. But, most of the states have not made any significant progress in this direction.

There is a **severe shortage of judges** in Indian courts. The vacancies range between 20 and 40% at the high court and subordinate court levels. This happens due to the slow pace of judicial appointments at all levels.

The shortage of judges has led to **delayed justice** for millions of Indians. For example, about 47mn cases are pending across different levels of the system.

As per the PRS Legislative, if no new cases were filed, at the current disposal rate **it would take high courts and subordinate courts three years each to dispose of the cases**.

In addition, the legal aid provided by the state is of **poor quality**. It has distorted Indians' access to justice. For example, most prefer to hire private lawyers to fight cases.

As per a 2016 study, the **litigants attending the lower courts** incur the loss of over Rs 1,300 per day in their wages and businesses.

India's low ranking on the World Bank's Global Ease of Doing Business survey, refers to the failure of the Indian judicial system to enforce contracts.

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The Way Forward

The Prime Minister has said that **justice delivery** is as critical as **access to justice**.

The PM argued for “**ease of justice**” alongside **ease of doing business** and **ease of living**.

13. [About One Belt One Road: Bring back the dhow route](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Bring back the dhow route**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th August 2022**.

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

Relevance: About the One Belt One Road initiative.

News: China’s interests in the Indian Ocean grew in the context of the ‘**One Belt, One Road**’ **initiative**. The OBOR constitutes massive geopolitical projects that aims to promote economic cooperation and connectivity between Asia, West Asia, Africa, and Europe.

But recently, a Chinese military vessel been scheduled to the Sri Lankan Port of Hambantota. This is because the Sri Lankan government is heavily in debt and distress partly due to the mega infrastructure of the Hambantota port and many other such projects under OBOR.

About the past trade routes

Indian Ocean trade routes since the old times include countries in the Arabian Gulf, East Africa, the Indian Peninsula, Bay of Bengal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and other small island states. From the ports and harbours on Bahr Faris (Arabian Gulf) and down to the Swahili Coast on the west to the ports and harbours on the far east to Malacca.

For centuries, Indian Ocean navigators, shipowners and merchants were the custodians of all trade routes that crisscrossed the Indian Ocean.

Ibn Battuta in his book The Rihla talks of his travels in the Maldives and all throughout the Indian Ocean trading ports.

In the last one thousand years, many emerging powers have frequently attempted to capture and centralise these trade routes.

The Portuguese rule immensely improved the boat-building capabilities of the Indian Ocean port cities, but they took away the trade from the local families.

The British colonial rule consolidated cargo in several bigger port cities. Britain’s advocacy of free trade also gave an opportunity for the local traders to freely trade within the Indian Ocean states.

Read more: [Explained | What is the status of China’s Belt and Road Initiative in South Asia?](#)

What is the status of OBOR in reviving trade routes?

The recent Chinese attempts to consolidate the Indian Ocean trade routes under OBOR are yet to materialise. But the host countries of the Belt and Road ports have gone or are going bankrupt, defaulting on their sovereign debt. For instance, Pakistan stands on the brink of sovereign default.

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Robust small units with more flexibility and agility can produce more inclusive and sustainable returns. Attempts to restructure the debt of the Indian Ocean countries and proceed with the same mega infrastructure programmes might not be the future vision of the Indian Ocean states.

So, in one form or another, the Indian Ocean states still maintain their maritime heritage. Revitalising regional trade networks will maintain peace and stability in the Indian Ocean.

Read more: [Explained | The G7 plan to counter the Belt and Road initiative](#)

14. [Why the President of India is also Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why the President of India is also Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces**” published in the **Indian Express** on **4th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Relevance: About the President as a supreme commander.

News: The recent debate in Parliament provoked the question “Why did the founding fathers vest this supreme command on the President despite India being a parliamentary democracy, not an executive presidency?”

What is the constitutional status of the President as a supreme commander?

Article 53 of the Constitution states that the executive power of the Union shall be vested in the President of India.

Article 53(2) mentions “Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provision, the supreme command of the Defence Forces of the Union shall be vested in the President and the exercise thereof shall be regulated by law”.

Article 74 states that the president shall exercise his functions only on the aid and advice of the council of ministers headed by the prime minister.

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

Debates on Constituent Assembly on President as a Supreme Commander

KM Munshi in the Constituent Assembly once argued that “The strongest government and the most elastic executive has been found to be in England and that is because the executive powers vest in the Cabinet supported by a majority of the lower house”.

He also said that the cabinet advises the head of the state namely the king or the President. “The King or the President is thus placed above the party. He is made really the symbol of the impartial dignity of the Constitution.”

However, in the Constituent Assembly, there is absolutely no discussion on vesting the supreme command of the defence forces in the president. It almost seems that the Constitution framers had taken it as a given that the supreme command of the armed forces would be vested in the presidency.

Similarly, the term “defence forces of the Union” is nowhere defined in the Constitution.

Read more: [The President is not a mere rubber stamp](#)

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Who is the Supreme Commander in other countries?

According to **British practice** where the supreme command of the armed forces is vested in the monarch.

In both the **American and French constitutional schemes**, the supreme command of the armed forces vests in the president. However, both these countries have an executive presidency.

China had an interesting institution dating back to 1925 called the Central Military Commission. But, the present form of China made the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party as the president of the republic and chairperson of the Central Military Commission.

In **Pakistan**, Article 243-1A, as amended by the Constitution Eighteenth Amendment Act 2010, states: “the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces shall vest in the President.” However, that has not stopped Pakistan from being convulsed by a series of coups.

Read more: [Being Truly Presidential](#)

Hence, it is evident that rather than any deliberate plan or design the President of India ended up becoming the Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces for the simple reason that the members of the Constituent Assembly decided to follow British precedent.

15. [Sober liquor policy: Delhi shows why all states need smart alcohol regulation and 100% private retail trade](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Sober liquor policy: Delhi shows why all states need smart alcohol regulation and 100% private retail trade**” published in **The Times of India** on **4th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Relevance: About alcohol regulation in India.

News: A new retail liquor trade policy introduced in Delhi in 2021 saw state’s withdrawal from the retail trade. This resulted in e-commerce-like discounts, litigations and allegations of corruption. So, less than a year after the new policy, the Delhi government will switch back to the old state-dominated retail trade.

Must read: [Prohibition of Liquor: Benefits and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

About India’s unique alcohol market

India’s alcohol market is characterised by two features. First, demand for alcohol seems impermeable to economic downturns. Second, alcohol catalyses moralising in India. These two features lead to alcohol’s unique political economy. These include,

1) It’s **highly taxed and along with fuel** makes up about 24% of the state’s own tax base. State taxes on alcohol raise around Rs 2.25 lakh crore a year. India’s vast **welfare system is funded partly by taxes on alcohol**, **2)** States make the **retail trade vulnerable to nationalisation**. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, private retailers have been pushed out two decades ago, **3)** There is **corruption through licensing and regulatory distortions** to favour handpicked manufacturers, **4)** **Prohibition** is the most extreme form of distortion. Gujarat’s hooch tragedy showed that the ban merely drives demand underground.

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Read more: [Death by hooch – India needs a more honest discussion on the risks and benefits of prohibition](#)

What should be done to regulate alcohol?

Reforms in Alcohol regulation are pending long due. Manufacturers and retailers **need a stable and transparent policy** like any other industry. A stable policy will have a **positive spin-off on agriculture**, a key raw material supplier.

India also needs a **straight regulatory system and 100% private retail for alcohol**.

16. [Infrastructure Finance Secretariat \(IFS\): Getting set to make an impact](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “IFS: Getting set to make an impact”, published in Business Standard on 4th August 2022.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Government departments and organisations

News: Government is setting up Infrastructure Finance Secretariat (IFS).

The 2 divisions of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA); 1) the Infrastructure Policy and Planning Division, and 2) the Infrastructure Support and Development Division, are now moved under a new set-up called Infrastructure Finance Secretariat (IFS).

IFS will have three sections: Infrastructure financing, sectoral studies, and capacity building.

If the IFS function as an extended arm of DEA, what was the need to set it up?

First, DEA has many times recommended having an institution like the 3P India, which was announced in Arun Jaitley’s budget speech in July 2014.

3P India was supposed to be an experts-led independent institution to revitalise the broken public-private partnership ecosystem.

The Kelkar Committee in 2015 in its report titled “Revisiting and Revitalising PPP Model of Infrastructure Development”, also strongly endorsed the setting up of 3P India.

Second, its mechanism will not be based on the bureaucratic model. It would have a mechanism for contractual hiring terms for experts. It would also attract professionals deputed from multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Third, The IFS is expected to harmonising policies and formats related to infrastructure financing and development. At present, the matter of infrastructure has the involvement of 16 line ministries at the center, along with the NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Finance plus individual efforts of 30-plus states and Union Territories.

Fourth, financial and operating playing field has changed substantially in the first two decades of this century. Now, Investment policy supports Greenfield projects through state funding and monetization and brownfield assets through private capital. Technical platforms like Gati Shakti and new financial institutions — namely, the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund, have been set up. Now, IFS was needed to bring coherency in the functioning of every aspect.

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Fifth, urban local bodies and village panchayats require capacity building to fulfill the obligation of ownership and operations and maintenance of utilities like Nal-Se-Jal. Capacity building is one of the priority mandates of the IFS.

Sixth, IFS will be one-stop to engage with various stakeholders like regulators, project bidders, asset owners, asset operators and investors.

What more can be done?

IFS could draw upon the learnings from similar organisations in other countries. For example, the National Infrastructure Commission of the United Kingdom was set up in October 2015.

In UK, the NIC functions as a think-tank focused on the long-term infrastructure priorities of the country. Thus, it provides advice and recommendations to the government on infrastructure challenges and strategy.

17. [What a new data law must have?](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “What a new data law must have” published in the Times of India on 5th August 2022.

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

Relevance: Data Governance in India

News: Recently, the Government of India (GOI) has withdrawn the Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 from Parliament, and the Union Ministry of Information Technology (MeiTY) is reportedly finalizing a new draft.

Some related concepts

Personal data protection: This is about allowing an individual to control how information about her is used,

Non-personal data regulation: It refers to the regulation of non-personal data for economic aims.

Reasons for withdrawing the draft bill

The **objectives** to protect personal data were diluted. The **Justice BN Sri Krishna committee** recommended protecting personal data, given the fundamental right to privacy. However, the draft bill 2019 included both personal and non-personal data. Later, a parliamentary committee examining the law also suggested a **common regulator** and law for personal and non-personal data.

What should an ideal data protection law look like?

(1) Our new law should focus on **personal data** and exclude **non-personal data**. Personal data is data about an individual or which relates to one, for example, our name, phone number, chat history, credit history, profile details, etc. In contrast, non-personal data may include, the number of cab users in a locality.

(2) There should be reform of **Indian surveillance laws** to put **checks on government use of data**. For this, certain privacy principles can be extended to data processing by law enforcement agencies, in line with the fundamental right to privacy.

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For instance, minimizing the amount of data collected by security agencies, limiting how long it can be stored, etc.

(3) There should not be an over-reliance on consent for data processing: In the withdrawn bill, there was an **over-reliance** on the consent of the individual. The law mandated consent for data processing every time, with limited exceptions. It neither empowered the individual nor took into consideration the business realities, like seeking consent for each act of processing was expensive and simply not feasible.

In contrast, the **EU's GDPR** recognizes that businesses may have legitimate interests in processing data and allows such processing, without businesses needing to resort to consent each time. Plus, the new law should provide ample consultation at each stage of regulation.

(4) The data regulator must be strong and coordinate with other regulators: The new law should establish a **robust regulator**. The regulator must also work closely with RBI, National Health Authority, TRAI, and other sectoral regulators. These regulators have already made inroads into data governance, like mandating local storage of payments data, barring merchants and payment aggregators from storing card data, restricting co-branding partners from accessing transaction data, etc.

(5) Enable cross-border data flows: The proposed law should enable and encourage cross-border data flows and limit data localization. Cross-border data flows are critical to economies. **For example, a McKinsey Global Institute Study in 2016** estimated that global data flows contributed **\$2.8 trillion** to the global GDP. It can enable the development of, and the skilling of our workforce in, new technologies like AI. It will also prevent the fragmentation of the internet.

18. [Sop or welfare debate](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Sop or welfare debate**” published in **The Hindu** on **5th August 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, Prime Minister warned youth not to get carried away by the ‘revari culture’, where votes are sought by promising ‘freebies’. In another instance, while hearing a PIL, the Chief Justice of India remarked that ‘freebies’ were a serious issue.

What are Freebies?

What constitutes ‘freebies’ and what are legitimate welfare measures to protect the vulnerable sections are essentially political question that has no answer yet.

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

What are the recent Supreme Court remarks on Freebies?

The Supreme Court felt that Parliament could discuss this issue but no party would want a debate on this, as all of them support such sops. The Bench also disfavoured the ECI preparing a ‘model manifesto’ as it would be an empty formality.

Read here: [Supreme Court calls for a panel to look into freebies issue](#)

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What are the SC's previous remarks on Freebies?

In **S. Subramaniam Balaji vs Government of Tamil Nadu (2013) case**, the court upheld the distribution of television sets or consumer goods on the ground that schemes targeted at women, farmers and the poorer sections were in **furtherance of Directive Principles**.

The court also held that as long as public funds were spent based on appropriations cleared by the legislature, they could **neither be declared illegal nor the promise can be termed a 'corrupt practice'**.

However, the court directed the **ECI to frame guidelines to regulate the content of manifestos**. The ECI subsequently included in its Model Code of Conduct a stipulation that parties should avoid promises "that vitiate the purity of the election process or exert undue influence on the voters". The code also stipulates that **only promises which were possible to be fulfilled should be made** and that manifestos should contain the rationale for a promised welfare measure and indicate the means of funding it.

What are the challenges associated with Freebies?

Freebies pushing the economy to **unviable pre-election promises** that adversely affect the informed decision-making by voters. The Solicitor-General report mentioned that Freebies distorted the voter's informed decision-making, and that unregulated populism may lead to an economic disaster.

Read more: [From freebies to welfare](#)

Any further step, such as distinguishing welfare measures from freebies and pre-election inducements, or adding to the obligations of fiscal responsibility and fiscal prudence must come from the legislature.

19. [Withdrawal of Personal Data Protection Bill: Who benefits from the delay?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Withdrawal of Personal Data Protection Bill: Who benefits from the delay?**" published in the **Indian Express** on **5th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Relevance: To understand the issues associated with the withdrawal of the Personal Data Protection Bill.

News: Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MEITY) withdrew the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019.

What is the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019?

A proposal for a data protection framework was first considered in 2011 when a draft was coordinated through the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions. An expert committee headed by Justice (retired) A P Shah in 2012 recommended, "a detailed framework that serves as the conceptual foundation for the Privacy Act". But the proposals were buried by 2014 due to objections from the intelligence establishment on surveillance reforms.

With petitions on the constitutionality of Aadhaar and the right to privacy were pending before the Supreme Court, the Union government constituted an expert group headed by Justice (retired)

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B N Srikrishna in July 2017. This led to the introduction of the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 in Parliament.

Must read: [Draft Personal Data Protection Bill – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the reason for withdrawal?

Read here: [Union government rolls back Data Protection Bill](#)

What are the issues associated with the withdrawal?

1) The JPC (Joint Parliamentary Committee) has nowhere suggested a withdrawal in favour of a “comprehensive legal framework”, but on the contrary pitched for the Bill to “be passed” with amendments. **2)** The government fears that a compliance burden can impede innovation and growth in the digital economy. **3)** There exists a reasonable argument that if passed into law, the 2019 bill may institutionalise bad privacy practices. Seeking changes in the law at a later date may be difficult considering the relentless pace of digitisation.

Read more: [Issue of privacy and Personal Data Protection Bill 2019](#)

What could have been done instead of withdrawal of PDPB?

a) To build stakeholder confidence and clear doubts on specific provisions, a public consultation could have been organised. **b)** With the government setting the goal of a one trillion dollar digital economy a regulatory intervention is required to improve the business practices in digital products and services. India should explore the existing parliamentary amendments and judicial review to update the law and fill the legal vacuum. **c)** Growing international consensus suggests that next-generation innovation in technology needs data protection.

Read more: [Need for a robust Personal Data Protection Bill](#)

The government should realise that every delay and status quo will result in unregulated collection and exploitation of personal data of millions of Indians

20. [Maldives President Solih’s visit came in a fraught moment in ties between the two countries. Delhi must tread carefully](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Maldives President Solih’s visit came in a fraught moment in ties between the two countries. Delhi must tread carefully**” published in the **Indian Express** on **5th August 2022**.

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

Relevance: India-Maldives ties.

News: The visit of the Maldives’ President to Delhi gave both sides the opportunity to reiterate the importance of the bilateral relationship.

What are the key highlights from the Maldives President’s visit?

Maldives came face to face with Islamist fundamentalism when some 300 of its citizens joined ISIS back in 2014. The cyber security pact signed between the two countries during the visit also underlined concerns over the rise of Islamist fundamentalism.

Read more: [Flagging terror threat, India pledges support to Maldives](#)

What is the reason behind the recent engagement between India and Maldives?

Firstly, India was the Maldives first responder for decades. But India has been edged out by the proximity of the Maldives previous government to China due to its “**India Out**” campaign. But

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the present government wants to restore relations with strategically located India through their **India First policy**.

Secondly, after seeing Sri Lanka become convulsed by China's debt trap diplomacy, Maldives realised that China's trap should be avoided.

What are the recent engagements between India and Maldives?

a) Over the last four years, India has provided financial assistance for a slew of projects, both as grants and in credit lines. **b)** India also provided a further credit line of \$100m for the completion of unfinished infrastructure projects. **c)** Under its Neighbourhood First policy, as well as SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), defence and security cooperation between the two countries has grown. **d)** Both countries are members of the **Colombo Security Conclave**, a grouping of three nations that is now growing to encompass the other Indian Ocean and South Asian countries.

Read more: [Different narratives: On India – Maldives ties](#)

What are the challenges faced in bilateral ties?

1) The previous Maldives government's "India Out" campaign has targeted defence ties with India in particular. **2)** The disruption of the Yoga Day event in Male shows the lengths that some elements are willing to go to in order to undermine the government and its ties with India.

Read more: [Explained: What's behind the new anti-India campaign in the Maldives?](#)

India must tread with caution and ensure that there is no room for misinterpretation of its actions in the Maldives.

21. [Lessons for India from the Taiwan standoff](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Lessons for India from the Taiwan standoff**" published in **The Hindu** on **6th August 2022**.

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

Relevance: About Taiwan-China clash and lessons to improve India-China relations from it.

News: Recently, the United States House Speaker visited Taiwan against Chinese warnings. This has the potential to increase the already deteriorating relationship between the U.S. and China. Further, by conducting the recent meeting Taiwan signalled that it is unwilling to back down from its declared aims, no matter what the consequences were.

Why Taiwan is important for US and China?

Taiwan is a small island of 23 million people which has decided to stand up to one of the strongest military and economic powers on the planet (China).

China claims about a rising superpower, but this might not be true if it is unable to unify its claimed territories, in particular Taiwan.

For the U.S., it is about re-establishing steadily-diminishing American credibility in the eyes of its friends and foes.

Read more: [Taiwan-China conflict and India's stand on it](#)

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Why are the mistakes of India's China policy?

First, India's policy of meeting/hosting Chinese leaders while the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) continue(d) to violate established territorial norms on the LAC is a deeply flawed one.

Second, India is unilaterally avoiding Chinese sensitivities even during the standoffs between the two militaries. For instance, the parliamentary delegation visits and legislature-level dialogues between India and Taiwan have not taken place since 2017.

Third, soft-peddling of the Quad when China objected to it. It is only in the last two years or so that India has witnessed renewed enthusiasm around the Quad.

Fourth, non-acknowledgement of the PLA's intrusion into Indian territory in 2020 standoff. For example, ever since the standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in 2020, the government has not clarified what really went on at the border in 2020 and whether China continues to be in illegal occupation of Indian territory.

What are the impacts of India's China appeasement policy?

India's current policy of 'hide and seek' vis-à-vis China amounts to poor messaging, and confuse its own people as well as the larger international community.

This provides **a)** China with the cover of ambiguity to pursue its territorial claims vis-à-vis India, **b)** Confuses India's friends in the international community, **c)** Make India's China policy counterproductive.

Read more: [Explained: 2 years after Galwan clash, where India-China relations stand today](#)

What lessons India should learn from the Taiwan standoff?

The growing economic and trading relationship between India and China is enough to ensure that tensions between the two sides do not escalate and that the two sides must find ways of co-existing peacefully.

India should remember that the trade deficit is in China's favour. On the other hand, China is Taiwan's largest trading partner, and China has an annual trade deficit of around \$80 billion to \$130 billion with Taiwan. China is dependent on the semiconductors produced in Taiwan in a big way.

This shows that the close economic relationship with China has not stopped Taiwan from asserting its rights, nor has it backed down under Chinese threats.

India should **learn the importance of articulating red lines and sovereign positions** in an unambiguous manner like Taiwan. Any absence of such clarity will be cleverly utilised by China to push Indian limits. So, India for sure should do business with China, but not on China's own terms.

Read more: [India China Trade deficit triggers uneasiness](#)

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22. [Addressing the challenges in new-age digital commerce](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Addressing the challenges in new-age digital commerce**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – E-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential.

Relevance: About the need for Online Dispute Resolution(ODR).

News: The novel coronavirus pandemic has further accelerated the process of digital inclusion. The rise in smartphone use fuelled by affordable data plans has catalysed an online revolution in the country.

For instance, the revolution has not only increased the routine to transact online but also learning online, having medical consultations online, and even resolving disputes online.

What are the challenges faced by small enterprises in digital inclusion?

Despite the rapid advancement small enterprises such as local Kirana stores have not gained from this. This is because, **a)** To sell on numerous platforms, sellers must maintain a separate infrastructure. This adds costs and limits participation, **b)** distinct terms and conditions of each platform limit the sellers’ flexibility, **c)** centralising digital commerce transactions on a single platform creates a single point of failure.

How Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) will create a level playing field?

Read here: [Open Network For Digital Commerce \(ONDC\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

The ONDC began its pilot in five cities in April 2022, i.e., New Delhi, Bengaluru, Coimbatore, Bhopal and Shillong. Currently, the pilot has expanded to 18 cities, and there are immediate plans to add more cities.

India’s e-commerce industry is set to reach \$200 billion by 2027, this shift from a platform-centric paradigm to the democratisation of the nation’s online market will catalyse the inclusion of millions of small business owners and kirana businesses.

What should be done to improve the ONDC?

It is important to ensure a positive dispute resolution experience. Hence, it is imperative to support the ONDC initiative with a modern-day, cost-effective, timely and high-speed dispute resolution system. This can be done by Online Dispute Resolution or ODR.

The need for ODR include, **1)** The ODR is not restricted to the use of legal mechanisms such as mediation, conciliation and arbitration in an online environment but can be tailor-made for the specific use case keeping the participants in mind, **2)** The ODR can not only digitise the entire value chain but can also facilitate an enhanced user experience, **3)** The ODR will help mitigate litigation risk and provide valuable insights into problems faced by consumers, **4)** Consumers are provided with another choice for effective redress of their grievances, thereby building trust, confidence and brand loyalty.

How does the government is utilising ODR?

The governments, regulators and private enterprises have been adopting and encouraging its use. For instance, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has mandated platforms in the UPI ecosystem to adopt the ODR for complaints and grievances connected to failed transactions.

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The other applications include, SEBI SCORES (SEBI COmplaints REdress System), RBI CMS (Complaint Management System), MSME Samadhaan (the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Delayed Payment Monitoring System), and RTIOnline are other examples of ODR systems that are widely used in the country.

Read more: [NITI Aayog Pushes for Online Dispute Resolution for Speedy Access to Justice](#)

A customised ODR process can help achieve a steep five-year target of adding \$48 billion in gross merchandise value to India's e-commerce market and aid a network of 90 crore buyers and 12 crore sellers with the least hiccups.

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General Studies Paper – 3

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General Studies - 3

1. [India's 'wheat waiver' WTO demand is risk-fraught](#)

Source: This post is based on the article **“India's 'wheat waiver' WTO demand is risk-fraught”** published in **The Hindu** on **1st August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Effects of liberalization on the economy

Relevance: About the public stockholding (PSH) of food.

News: Recently, India demanded [World Trade Organization \(WTO\)](#) to find a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding (PSH) of food to protect India's food security (PSH policy).

About India's PSH Policy and WTO rules

India's PSH policy is based on procuring food from farmers at an administered price (minimum support price or MSP – generally higher than the market price).

The PSH policy serves the twin objectives **1) Offering remunerative prices to farmers** and **2) Providing subsidised food to the underprivileged**.

However, under WTO law, such price support-based procurement from farmers is considered as a trade-distorting subsidy. Currently, India has temporary relief due to a 'peace clause' that bars countries from raising legal challenges against these subsidies.

India's concern is that WTO should have the policy space to hold public food stocks using the MSP. However, there is no mention of price support in the Geneva declaration.

Read more: [12th Ministerial Conference of the WTO – Explained, pointwise](#)

Can the country export public stock holding food grains?

WTO law also prohibits countries from exporting foodgrain procured at subsidised prices. This is because, **a)** Gives an unfair advantage in global agricultural trade, **b)** A country will sell foodgrain in the international market at a very low price. This will depress the global prices and have an adverse impact on the agricultural trade of other countries.

Accordingly, in paragraph 4 of the 2013 WTO decision on PSH for food security purposes, countries procuring food for food-security purposes shall ensure that such procured food does not “distort trade or adversely affect the food security of other Members”.

This is also reflected in paragraph 10 of the Geneva ministerial food security declaration. The declaration states that countries may release surplus food stocks into the international market in accordance with WTO law. The WTO may agree to a temporary waiver to allow the export of wheat from public stockholdings given the ongoing food crisis in some countries.

Read more: [The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies \(Agreement\) at the WTO Ministerial meeting](#)

Status of PSH on recent WTO ministerial meeting

India's demand for a permanent solution to the PSH policy has acquired a new dimension in the recent WTO meeting. . The Russia-Ukraine war has unleashed a food crisis in many countries.

India insists that it should also be allowed to export food, especially wheat, from the pool of foodgrain procured under the MSP.

Read more: [Indian interests at the WTO Ministerial Conference](#)

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What should India do to protect India's PSH policy?

1) India should **revisit its stand on asking for a waiver for wheat exports** from its public stockholding. To help the food crisis in other countries, India can strengthen its commitment to the United Nations World Food Programme.

2) India should **focus on its core agenda** of pushing for a permanent solution for its PSH programme to attain the goal of food security, **3)** India can **lift the ban imposed on private traders to export wheat**.

2. [Financial health of airline sector is the real cause for concern, not overblown safety issues](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Financial health of airline sector is the real cause for concern, not overblown safety issues"** published in the **Indian Express** on **1st August 2022**.

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

Relevance: To understand aviation safety in India.

News: The recent incidents of airlines developing technical glitches have received widespread public scrutiny, raising concerns about the safety of Indian carriers. But this is not the real problem in aviation safety.

What is the performance of Indian aircrafts on safety parameters?

As per International Air Traffic Association (IATA) records, there was only one accident in every 9.9 lakh flights in 2021 as opposed to one in every 6.3 lakh flight in 2020, globally.

India's air safety indicators are significantly ahead of the global average. In 2019, there were just 0.82 accidents per million flights as compared to the global average of 3.02.

The improvement in India's performance can be noted in the fact that accidents per million flights were 2.8 in 2014.

Why does the recent issues are not significant for aviation safety?

Quality of human resources: This includes the critical facets of training pilots, ground crew and engineers helped in improving India's progress.

Minimum Equipment List (MEL): The incidents of airlines' Minimum Equipment List (MEL) have been repeatedly highlighted for the faltering safety standards. However, simply having a MEL by an airline does not translate into a compromise of safety margins.

The categories of MELs are defined by the manufacturer and duly approved by the regulator — the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

Note: *Oversight over Indian carriers is not just maintained by the DGCA but also by the IATA and EASA.*

The incidents of windshield fissures or crack: An aircraft windshield comprises multiple layers and houses a heating system. The movement of aircraft can cause certain stresses which might lead to cracks in the windshield. This is a fairly common occurrence that can take place due to adverse weather conditions.

Similarly, bird hits can also occur at any time as this is not a controllable factor.

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

What are the challenges faced while ensuring aviation safety?

a) Robustness of aircraft maintenance: To ensure proper maintenance an aircraft must have the requisite bandwidth and repository of spare parts. In the backdrop of the Ukraine-Russia war, titanium is in short supply.

Note: 60% of Titanium comes from Russia. It is a major component of aircraft spares and engines.

b) Multiple low-cost airline operators: These airlines attract a greater portion of the market share, and keep ticket prices low enough to attract customers while managing operations as well as staff salaries. This poses a grave challenge to the sustenance of airlines.

c) Financial health of the sector: Apart from spares shortage, the sector is facing shipping disruptions and high fuel prices. A huge monotony of systems in every airline makes flights expensive.

Multiple taxes further push up costs even while competition between airlines creates immense pressure on the balance sheets. All this creates a situation of high operating costs for the entire aviation industry.

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

What should be done to improve India's aviation sector?

The regulator must seriously consider the issues regarding the shortage of spare parts owing to delayed payments to vendors. The DGCA should also take steps to improve the financial health of airlines.

3. [PMLA verdict, an erosion of constitutional buffers](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “PMLA verdict, an erosion of constitutional buffers” published in **The Hindu** on **1st August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Money-laundering and its prevention.

Relevance: About the issues surrounding PMLA.

News: The Supreme Court in **Vijay Madanlal Choudhary and Ors versus Union of India case** upheld the provisions of the [PMLA \(Prevention of Money Laundering Act\)](#).

What was the case about?

Read here: [Supreme Court upholds powers of arrest, raids, seizure under PMLA](#)

What are the significant provisions of PMLA?

Read here: [Prevention of Money Laundering Act\(PMLA\)](#)

Section 3 of the Act says, “Whosoever directly or indirectly attempts to indulge or knowingly assists or knowingly is a party or is actually involved in any process or activity connected with the proceeds of crime including its concealment, possession, acquisition or use and projecting or claiming it as untainted property shall be guilty of the offence of money-laundering.”

The term “proceeds of crime” is separately defined to mean property that is obtained out of the commission of a crime “relating to a scheduled offence”. The schedule offence contains an array

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of breaches under 30 different statutes including the Arms Act, 1959 and the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, etc.

Nikesh Tarachand Shah vs Union of India case: The court declared the classification of offences under the PMLA into two categories as unconstitutional. The Court found the classification between offences unreasonable and the conditions themselves too disproportionate.

The Parliament deleted the classification. Later the court upheld it.

What are the basic precepts of justice violated by PMLA?

Some basic precepts of justice and fairness are inherent to India's criminal justice system. These precepts are, **a)** A person is presumed innocent until proven guilty, **b)** A person detained on suspicion of having committed an offence would be entitled to bail pending trial, **c)** A criminal law ought not to be retroactive, **d)** A person accused of an offence must be informed of the charges made against him; and **e)** A suspect has a privilege against incriminating herself.

But the PMLA violated all these precepts.

Read more: [Narrow view – SC verdict on PMLA fails to protect personal liberty from draconian provisions](#)

What are the concerns associated with the PMLA?

Read here: [Supreme Court examines allegations of rampant misuse of PMLA](#)

The other concerns are,

PMLA is not a penal statute: The offence under the PMLA is separately prosecutable, unless the proceeds of crime related to a “scheduled offence” no case can be made out under the statute. In other words, if a person is ultimately acquitted or discharged in a case concerning the predicate offence, the charge under the PMLA can no longer be maintained.

Violative of K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India case: The recent verdict fails to protect personal liberty(Right to privacy) from draconian provisions.

Read more: [How Enforcement Directorate \(ED\) became so powerful?](#)

4. [Sowing the 'AI' seed for intelligent farming](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Sowing the 'AI' seed for intelligent farming**” published in **The Times of India** on **1st August 2022**.

Syllabus: **GS 3** – E-technology in the aid of farmers.

Relevance: Application of the Artificial Intelligence in the Agriculture Sector

News: The Telangana government has promoted the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in its agricultural innovation program

John McCarthy, American computer scientist, first introduced the world to the term “artificial intelligence” at the 1955 Dartmouth Conference.

Why do we need AI in the agricultural sector?

India is expected to surpass China by 2023 to become the **world's most populated country**. Therefore, there would be immense pressure to feed such a huge population base.

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According to the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**, by 2030, the demand for pulses, cereals, rice, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and milk will be more than twice, in India, of what it was in 2000. While the Demand for food grains is expected to jump by more than 85%.

According to NITI Aayog, AI has the potential to add **\$1 trillion** to India's economy by 2035. And, as per some experts and academicians, a significant amount of this would be in the agriculture sector.

Application of the AI in agriculture

(1) It can help in efficient and cost-effective resource and yield management in the agricultural sector.

(2) AI, cloud computing, satellite imagery, and advanced analytics, in combination, can create an ecosystem for **smart agriculture**.

(3) It can be useful in **prediction analysis**. It will ensure the highest possible yields based on the **seasonal forecast models**. For example, it can enable farmers to extract and analyze information such as weather, temperature, water consumption, or soil conditions through data collected directly from their fields.

(4) It has the potential to address **supply-demand mismatch** in real-time. For example, a **supply-demand engine** or **predictor** that can map supply and demand can reduce this issue significantly.

(5) Artificial intelligence can help in precision farming by determining whether pesticides and weedicides should be used by detecting and targeting weeds in the identified buffer zone. This can lead to **higher yields and reduced use of** pesticides and weedicides.

(6) AI-based natural **language translation** facilitates the issuance and spread of Agri-advisories, weather forecasts, and early warnings for droughts in **multiple vernacular languages**.

(7) The use of image recognition using AI approaches for plant identification, pest infestation, and disease diagnosis is also becoming prevalent.

What are the challenges in the AI application to the agricultural sector?

(1) The lack of proper infrastructure and know how, faith in conventional styles of functioning, lack of awareness and scarcity of farmer capital,

(2) The fragmentation of land could also prove to be a hurdle for **large-scale implementation** of new technologies.

Measures Taken for the application of AI in agriculture

The ICAR is looking at **cyber agro-physical systems** to make Indian farming a **viable, self-sustaining, and internationally competitive enterprises**.

The NITI Aayog identifies agriculture as one of the focus areas as part of its national strategy for AI.

Several states are serious about AI in agriculture. For instance, (1) **Karnataka** has partnered with a leading MNC for agricultural produce, price-related information, and intelligence using predictive modeling, (2) Uttar Pradesh is collaborating with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the Tata Trust to set up the **Indian agritech incubation network** at

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IIT-Kanpur (3) Maharashtra has launched the **Maha AgriTech project** that is aimed at utilizing and promoting the application of satellites and drones to solve various agrarian problems.

What should be done?

It is high time that collaborative **Agri-data stacks** are created and MSME and large corporations invest in this space.

There is a need for the right mix of participation from **public** and **private institutions**. **For example**, Data coming in from the government side is not accurate, not updated frequently, and is noisy. Therefore, the private sector has incentives to make data accurate as they are making decisions based on it.

5. [How IAF's hero became a villain](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**How IAFs Hero became A Villain**” published in **The Times of India** on **1st August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Internal and External Security; Various Security Forces and their mandate

News: Recently, a fatal accident involving India's MiG-21 aircraft took place, which is part of the Indian Air Force (IAF) fleet.

What are the reasons behind frequent MiG-21 aircraft crashes in India?

(1) Although India has also inducted **newer aircraft** to complement the MiG-21 fleet, it still forms the backbone of IAF. It has been part of the IAF since the 1960s. Over the next six decades, the fleet of MiG-21 has been subjected to adaptation and evolution to fill in capability gaps. **For example**, its role has shifted from a pure air defence fighter to a strike aircraft, multi-role fighter, and even as a lead-in trainer for young pilots transitioning from basic jet trainers to fighters.

(2) The use of MiG in training became a major cause of accidents. Therefore, it was tagged as the “**Flying Coffin**”. It was because MiG-21 was too big or complex for rookie pilots under training.

(3) Once the Hawk Jet Trainer was inducted in 2007, the accidents notably reduced,

What are the reasons that MiG-21 continued to be functional in the Indian Air Force (IAF)?

(1) There have been **delays in the delivery of Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)**, and when delivered to IAF, it was with a lesser no. of specifications, than required. Thus, IAF upgraded the MiG-21s and kept the squadron numbers from plummeting.

(2) Any **modern-day air force** attempts to develop a **Hi-Lo mix** in its fighter inventory. The ‘Hi’ component refers to expensive and more capable aircraft, and the low component refers to the aircraft used to acquire the quality that lies embedded in quantity. For example, the US has the F-22/F-16, the Chinese have developed the J-20/ J-10 and Pakistan is working on the J-10/JF-17 mix.

(3) For modern-day combat, the IAF requires **Rafale** to serve **the hi-end of the spectrum**. However, even if the LCA is inducted in large numbers, IAF would still need heavier fighter aircraft to fulfill the capability.

(4) India is facing a **two-front war scenario**. Therefore, the situation necessitates larger numbers of aircraft in the IAF fleet.

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The problem of MiG crashes does not lie in MiG-21 or anything else, but it is the result of India's broken procurement process. Therefore, the policymakers must fix the procurement process.

6. [Using a rupee route to get around a dominating dollar](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Using a rupee route to get around a dominating dollar”** published in **The Hindu** on **2nd August 2022**.

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

Relevance: To understand the concept of promoting the Rupee in International Transactions.

News: A number of countries, including India, are now considering the use of other currencies to avoid the U.S. dollar and its hegemonic role in settling international transactions. This is due to recent geopolitical developments in the Russia-Ukraine war followed by the sanctions imposed on Russia by the West.

What are the impacts of sanctions on Russia?

The impact of sanctions on Russia includes **a)** L-shaped stagnation in GDP which has declined by 10% to 15%, **b)** de-industrialisation and unemployment leading to sharp declines in the production of steel, wood and automobiles.

Read more: [RBI and the rupee: To break a free fall or not to](#)

About India's past Rupee-Rubel transactions

A comprehensive bilateral trade and payments agreement was signed by India in 1953 with the Soviet bloc countries. The deal includes fixed exchange rates as agreed upon by trade partners and the offer of credit by countries that had a trade surplus to countries with a trade deficit.

The Soviet Union's credit to India enabled the setting up of the Bhilai steel plant, other industrial units, oil refineries and pharmaceuticals — all controlled by India's public sector. The agreement ended in 1991 following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Read more: [Explained: What Rs 80 to a dollar means](#)

How does India is promoting Rupees for international transactions at present?

The options for invoicing in rupees were already legal in terms of Regulation 7(1) of the Foreign Exchange Management (Deposit) Regulations, 2016.

In recent times, India has been taking an active interest in having the rupee used for trade and the settlement of payments with other countries. This includes Russia as well.

The Reserve Bank of India has recently taken a proactive stand to have a rupee settlement of the trade. The current circular aims to operationalise the special Vostro accounts with Russian banks in India to promote trade and gain a better status for the rupee as an international currency.

Read more: [Why there is no reason to panic over the rupee](#)

What are the challenges of using Rupees for international transactions?

These include **1)** Lack of willingness of private parties (companies, banks) to accept the rupee for trade and settlements, **2)** Challenge in agreeing to a common exchange rate between the rupee and the foreign country. For instance, the exchange rate between the rupee and the ruble (R-R),

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3) Promoting Russian Ruble and Indian Rupee trade deals, especially on oil, can be considered by the West as India's 'indirect back door support'.

What are the advantages of using Rupees for international transactions?

a) India can avoid transactions in the highly-priced dollar which has an exchange value of ₹80, b) Provide stability to the Indian economy and prevent inflation and capital flight and c) Prevent the drop in foreign exchange reserves.

Read more: [External vulnerabilities: Time for a rupee review](#)

The R-R exchange rate can benefit both trade partners and counter the ongoing currency hierarchy.

7. [Contractual jobs in government: Government's own 'gig workers'](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "Government's own 'gig workers'" published in **The Hindu** on **2nd August 2022**.

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

Relevance: To understand the Contractual jobs in government.

News: While the Agnipath scheme has ignited a debate on the nature of jobs in the government, 'temporary' (gig) jobs have comprised the vast majority of available government employment. The modalities of "contractual" jobs in the public sector require a much deeper examination.

What are the types of outsourcing in government works?

Outsourcing has become the dominant mode of working in the government, from highly specialised tasks to the most routine ones. They may be classified into three categories; permanent, contractual and daily wagers.

There are two main methods to induct an 'employee' on contract in a government entity; **1)** Directly on the payroll of the entity and, **2)** Through a labour contractor or as part of any other contract entered into pursuant to a tender process. In this, the burden of responsibility is shifted to the contractor. This is the predominant mode of engaging contractual workers by the government.

In both cases, the costs and liabilities of the government entity are significantly reduced compared to a "permanent" position.

Read more: [Gig Economy in India and the Issues faced by Gig Workers – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the advantages of contractual jobs in government?

1) It can augment the capacity of the government, particularly those works of the state that cater various services to people, **2)** It creates a viable avenue of employment for India's burgeoning working-age population.

What are the issues faced by contractual jobs in government?

Some common problems of contractual jobs also persist in government contractual jobs. These includes,

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a) Non-payment of salaries for extended periods, **b)** Distorting of statutory deductions for the worker's welfare such as provident fund (PF), employees' state insurance (ESI), etc. by the labour contractor, and **c)** Uneven distribution of work vis-à-vis "permanent" employees.

The other challenges include **a)** Overwhelming reliance on contractors has undermined the functioning of government institutions, **b)** There is an endless chain of delegating tasks. At any time there are more people to get things done than those who could actually do things,

All this **affects the quality of public service** that is sought to be provided including sanitation, public transport, health, etc.

***Note:** The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs' **The Urban Learning Internship Program (TULIP)** enables city authorities to directly engage a young workforce for a fixed term.*

Read more: [Niti Aayog's report on India's gig economy: what has the think-tank recommended?](#)

How to improve the condition of contractual jobs in government?

It is important to recognise contractual jobs in government. In line with the vision of social justice enshrined in the Constitution, affirmative actions should be taken to address the issues associated with contractual jobs. It is time for the government to take some concrete measures for its own "gig workers".

8. [Rethinking the coal issue](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Rethinking the coal issue**" published in the Business Standard on 2nd August 2022.

Syllabus: GS 3 Infrastructure: Energy Sector

Relevance: Coal Sector Reforms

News: At present, the country has been frequently facing coal supply crises. India is compelled to import expensive coal to keep its thermal power plants running.

Status of coal reserves in India

According to the Geological Survey of India's **Inventory**, India has one of the highest coal reserves in the world. The total assessed geological coal resource in the country is 352 billion tonnes.

The bulk of India's reserves, i.e., over 282 billion tonnes, consist of the relatively low calorific value thermal or non-coking coal. This coal is used to power most of the thermal power plants.

The country has fewer reserves of the higher quality **coking coal**, which is used in the metallurgical industry. Therefore, India needs to import coking coal.

History of coal sector regulation in India

The bulk of India's privately run coal mines were nationalized between 1971 and 1973. It was because, private mines were mismanaged and there were many serious accidents and safety-related concerns for coal miners. Further, private players lacked the resources and the inclination to improve coal mining efficiency and production.

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Issues with the coal sector at present

It is not expected that India imports non-coking coal to power the thermal power plants of India because India possesses a large reserve of non-coking coal.

Causes for our failure to meet domestic demand for thermal coal

Proximate Causes

(1) Although **Coal India Ltd (CIL)** has increased its production, it has not been able to keep pace with rising demand.

(2) The perpetually **cash-starved state DISCOMS**, which delay payments to producers, who in turn delay payments to the CIL.

(3) **Bad logistic planning** in India, due to which the coal remains available at pithead instead of being available to power plants.

(4) The private sector coal mines are still marginal to India's demand-supply equation.

(5) Another issue is the environmental one. The Union government's enthusiasm for encouraging **renewable power production** has often made it turn a blind eye to the **thermal power sector** because **coal emissions** are seen as a chief villain on the climate change front by everyone.

Ultimate Causes: Policy failure to take the long view of the coal sector. The CIL has not been able to solve the problem of production lagging behind demand. Further, even during the period of the 1991 reforms, the coal issue was not on the priority list.

What should be done?

The government needs to realize that **coal demand** cannot be ignored for at least three decades, if not more. Therefore, India needs to plan for coal as it will remain the **mainstay of thermal power generation**. Simultaneously, India should look for solutions to **utilize domestic coal reserves** present across the country, while also minimizing emissions

The coal emissions can be reduced through technologies like **coal liquefaction** and **carbon capture, storage, and utilization (CCUS) technologies**.

India needs to encourage research and development of carbon capture, storage, and coal liquefaction technologies, like being done by China, Indonesia, and several other countries.

The coal liquefaction from domestic mines could serve as an alternative source of gas when crude and natural gas prices go too high.

9. [Recalling India's Antarctica activities](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Recalling India's Antarctica activities**" published in **The Hindu on 3rd August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Relevance: India's Antarctic policy

News: Parliament has recently passed the Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022.

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What are the salient provisions of the Antarctic Bill, 2022?

Read here: [The Indian Antarctic Bill and its various provisions](#)

How did India shape the Antarctic treaty?

In February 1956, Jawaharlal Nehru and V.K. Krishna Menon began India's Antarctic policy. India became the first country in the world to request for an item on the agenda of the eleventh United Nations General Assembly entitled "The Question of Antarctica." The agenda aims to ensure that the vast areas and its resources were used entirely for peaceful purposes and for the general welfare.

After the Nehru-Menon initiative, twelve countries who believed that they had a direct stake in Antarctica started discussions among themselves and on December 1, 1959, the Antarctica Treaty was signed in Washington DC. Many countries such as the USSR and India were neither involved nor invited.

Subsequently, Antarctica faded from the Indian geopolitical gaze.

Read more: [Antarctica is losing ice 6 times faster today than in 1980s](#)

How did India get membership in the Antarctic treaty?

Later, Indira Gandhi appointed noted marine biologist Syed Zahoor Qasim as secretary of the newly-created Department of Environment in April 1981. Later a separate Department of Ocean Development was also created.

First Antarctic expedition: On January 9, 1982, India claimed that India's first Antarctic expedition (Operation Gangotri) has reached its destination. No other Asian country, including China, had a presence there.

A well-known British science magazine New Scientist reported India's expedition under the headline '**Indians quietly invade Antarctica**'. India's expedition was due to **a)** Antarctica's mineral wealth, **b)** To gain greater knowledge of the Indian Ocean and the monsoons, **c)** To research about life in ice-bound regions and marine biodiversity.

Second Antarctic expedition: A second expedition led by one of India's top geologists V.K. Raina landed in Antarctica on December 10, 1982.

With two expeditions successfully completed within a span of 11 months, **India finally became a member of the Antarctic Treaty** in 1983 and China followed in 1985. Today the Treaty has 46 members and has a Convention on Marine Living Resources and a Protocol on Environmental Protection as well.

Read more: [Need and significance of The Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022](#)

About India's later Antarctic missions

a) In 1984, India's first Antarctic team started wintering there and a few months afterwards unmanned Antarctic research base Dakshin Gangotri was established.

b) Since then, India has set up two manned research stations in Antarctica — Maitri in 1988 and Bharati in 2012. Forty expeditions to the continent have taken place.

c) The Antarctic Bill provides a detailed legal framework for India's Antarctic activities that are consistent with its international treaty obligations.

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What should be done to increase India's Antarctic activities?

1) India has been chartering polar research ships from countries like Russia and Norway while China has two of its own. A decision was taken in 2014 for India to have its own research ship with ice-breaking and other advanced technological capabilities but it remains unimplemented. Hence, the **issue of a polar research vessel needs to be addressed** immediately.

2) India should **revamp the old Maitri research station**.

10. [Digital India is well positioned to make the most of globalization](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Digital India is well positioned to make the most of globalization"** published in the **Live Mint** on 3rd August 2022.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development, and Employment; Effects of Liberalization on the Economy, Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

News: According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report, internet traffic/ information flows in 2022 will exceed all the internet traffic up to 2016, in this globalized world.

About the Globalization

Jeffrey D. Sachs, in his book *The Ages of Globalization*, presents **seven distinct ages of globalization** since pre-historical times. These were driven by the interplay of geography, technology, and institutions.

Economic progress and globalization have undergone **three industrial revolutions**, and **Industrialization 4.0** is currently underway.

(1) First Industrial Revolution: It started in the 19th century with the use of steam and coal which resulted in **mechanization**, which contributed to lowering the cost of transport across the world.

(2) Second IR: This time the use of electricity and railroads started. It complemented the mass production. Thus, trade and commerce expanded manifold.

(3) Third phase: It was marked by the advent of computers and the emergence of low-cost manufacturing and global supply chains.

(4) Fourth revolution: The present age of globalization, known as **Digital Globalization**, commenced in 2000. It is described as **the Digital Age**.

It rides on **digital technology**, which is set to disrupt almost every industry in every country. Digital economies, in turn, run on the new fuel known as data. Data is a new resource or new oil of the 21st century.

How digitization is changing the economics of globalization?

The digital platforms are driving down the cost of **cross-border communications and transactions**.

It enabled **small businesses and entrepreneurs** like MSMEs, around the world, to participate in global trade through Global Value Chains (GVCs).

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Issues and Challenges in the digital globalization

This age of digital globalization is characterized by **large imbalances, digital divides** between haves and have-nots, and other development challenges.

(1) There are **technical** and **infrastructural challenges** that prevent developing countries from using the digital economy as a potential growth engine.

(2) More than 20% of the population in the developing world does not have access to a mobile broadband network. Further, the **internet speeds** are about 8 times lower in these developing countries.

(3) According to the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) Digital Economy Report, 2021**, there is a huge **digital divide** in terms of digital readiness between various countries. For example, the US and China are front-runners in harnessing data. They have 50% of the world's hyper-scale data centers, the world's highest rates of **5G adoption**, 70% of the world's top artificial intelligence (AI) researchers, and 94% of all funding for AI start-ups.

(4) Both the US and China make up about **90% of the market capitalization** of the world's largest digital platforms. Further, these platforms increasingly control all stages of global data value chains.

(5) Most developing countries will find it difficult to transform their economies through digitization. These countries risk being left on the periphery of an evolving globalization paradigm.

(6) There is a challenge in regulating data/information flows and setting up rules so that all participants prosper.

Measures Taken for Digital India to transform India into a digitally empowered economy:

(1) We have a stable and secure digital infrastructure provided by Aadhaar, CERT-In, etc;

(2) The government digitally delivers government services through the Agrimarket App, Bhim, Digital AIIMS, etc.; and

(3) The government has launched schemes for **universal digital literacy**, accessible digital resources, and collaborative digital platforms for participative governance to help narrow the digital divide in India.

11. [Time for a global treaty on uber-deadly weapons](#)

Source: The Post is based on an article "**Time for a global treaty on uber-deadly weapons**" published in the **Live Mint** on **2nd August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Internal and External Security

Relevance: The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, 2022.

News: Recently, The Ministry of External Affairs introduced **the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, 2022**. In a global context, this is a **pre-emptive move** in relation to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

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Features in the bill

The bill bars the **financing** of WMDs and their delivery vehicles. Further, it empowers the government to **freeze** and **seize the financial assets** and resources of those engaged in this illicit activity.

The new provisions cover **all holdings** that are either owned or controlled, wholly or jointly, directly or indirectly by offenders, and also any other things which are held by others on their behalf.

The Centre can take action via **any authority** that it has assigned this task to execute the order.

What was the need for such a law for WMD in India?

There are enough **nuclear bombs** on the planet earth which are sufficient to kill all life on earth many times over. There may be an **accidental launch** of a nuclear missile tipped with a fissile warhead.

The risk of terrorists armed with nuclear, chemical, or biological devices or even aircraft filled with jet fuel has increased. For example, 'the **9/11 Terror Attack** 'was suffered by the US in 2001.

The US invaded Iraq based on its anxiety over the presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Thus, the presence of WMDs, can lead to state conflicts.

During the Soviet-US Cold War, the **mutually assured destruction** (MAD) doctrine was an assurance of peace in the world. However, the role of the **non-state actors** who are mostly **state-sponsored** has increased

Other Measures Taken to tackle such threat

Global efforts to minimize terror threats include **stopping money** from being sneaked into the development of weapons that can kill at scale.

Recently, India has aligned its policy with the advice of the Financial Action Task Force. India has amended its 2005 ban on making WMDs to outlaw the funding of such activity as well.

What should be done?

To help secure the world, India should propose a global treaty that commits every state to '**no first use**' of WMDs, in line with **New Delhi's no first use nuclear doctrine**.

Further, All the countries holding WMD ensure that **non-state actors** mustn't get access to nukes and other mass killers.

Our WMD law may seem unlikely to be invoked, given the scant evidence available of such further, India's WMD law, should not be misapplied to the subjects. Here, judiciary can play a vital role

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12. 5G power for India and Bharat

Source: The post is based on an article “5G power for India and Bharat” published in the **Business Standard** on 2nd August 2022.

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

Relevance: Communication Networks; 5G etc.

News: Recently, the government carried out the 5G spectrum auction. Also, the Union Cabinet approved a **mega revival package** for state-owned telco Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL)

What are the arguments against the revival of the BSNL?

The PSU has been losing market share to the private sector and piling up losses over the years. Therefore, the **5G auction** and **BSNL revival package** create a confusing picture in the telecom industry at present.

What are the arguments in favor of the revival of the BSNL?

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) data explains that India needs both BSNL and next-generation services, like 5G.

5G will enable the telecom industry to put India on the global map in multiple spheres, ranging from healthcare to education and consumer business. Whereas, **BSNL** will serve **rural India** despite the private sector making definite inroads into the hinterland.

Some reasons of evidence that support the demand for the revival of the BSNL in India are:

In wireline or fixed phone service

(1) At the all-India level, BSNL is the leading operator in wireline with 7.59 million subscribers, followed by Bharti Airtel.

(2) At the rural-India level, BSNL's share in the **total rural market share** in wireline is 23.72%, followed by Reliance Jio's rural market share in wireline at 1.24%.

In wireless or mobile services

(1) In India's wireless market, BSNL still possesses 7.06% of India's rural wireless market share.

Tele-density

It is the number of **telephone connections for every 100 individuals** living within the area. According to **TRAI's quarterly data**, as of March 31, 2022, India's rural teledensity is at 58.07%. There are some 15 circles, where rural teledensity is more than 50%. For example, Kerala leads with a rural teledensity of 211.4%, followed by Himachal Pradesh at 104.48%, Andhra Pradesh at 78.56%, and so on.

What should be done?

These figures suggest that rural India holds the power in telecom. Therefore, it needs both BSNL and 5G. 5G is a tool whose time has come to empower citizens with ultra-high-speed data in both India and Bharat.

The 5G Technology may provide better communication facilities, downloading speed of light, etc.

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13. [That pulses are not prioritised speaks of perverse policies that encourage crops requiring more water and chemical fertilisers](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**That pulses are not prioritised speaks of perverse policies that encourage crops requiring more water and chemical fertilisers**” published in the **Indian Express** on **4th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Major crop-cropping patterns in various parts of the country.

Relevance: About the reducing pulse cultivation in India.

News: Pulses are referred to as “orphan crops”. India is facing reducing pulse cultivation.

What is the reason for reducing pulse cultivation?

Pulses cultivation has reduced because

1) They are mostly **grown in marginal lands** prone to moisture stress,

2) Farmers **switch to more high-yielding crops when they have access to irrigation**. For instance, the surplus rainfall in much of the South Peninsula, Central and Northwest India led to falling in kharif pulses crops arhar (pigeon- by 13.5%). But rising for moong (green gram) and urad (black gram). This is because these are of shorter duration (60-90 days), unlike arhar which takes 160-180 days.

3) Farmers, especially in the two major pulses-growing states of Maharashtra and Karnataka, have basically **diverted arhar area to soyabean and cotton**.

Soyabean is trading roughly 50% above its minimum support price (MSP). Also, its yields are more or less the same as arhar with hardly 90-100 days’ maturity time. Bountiful rains have given an added boost to cotton.

4) The **lack of price certainty** and a better than normal monsoon have resulted in pulses acreage going up mainly in Rajasthan and MP. Even there, farmers have opted for moong, urad and other short-duration pulses. As this can be harvested early to enable planting of their main rabi winter-spring crop of wheat or mustard.

Read more: [India’s pulses problem: We need real reform](#)

What are the benefits of Pulses?

a) Pulses are a valuable protein source for many Indians whose diets are vegetarian and cereal-based, **b)** Pulses harbour bacteria that naturally “fix” atmospheric nitrogen and their extensive root systems keep the soil porous and well-aerated.

Read more: [A new public stocking policy centred on pulses, edible oils and vegetables is needed to manage unseasonal price hikes](#)

What should be done to improve pulses cultivation?

Pulses **should become a commercial crop** rather than a crop of last resort. This requires **1)** Assured MSP, **2)** A stable import policy, **3)** Breeding of varieties that are of shorter duration and amenable to mechanical harvesting, **4)** Policies that encourage farmers to grow crops requiring less water and chemical fertilisers.

Read more: [Diversification of Food Basket Through Pulses](#)

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14. [Letting jobless growth worsen is way too risky](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Letting jobless growth worsen is way too risky**”, published in **Live Mint** on 4th August, 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3, Indian Economy, Employment and development

Context: In an emerging country, like India, the path to productivity and growth must lead workers away from farms towards jobs in factories and offices. However, India had limited success in this transition.

Some estimates say India need to create 90 million jobs by 2030 to absorb new entrants to the workforce.

As per Periodic Labour Force Survey, the proportion of Indians employed in agriculture was falling for decades, but this process flattened some years ago and reversed by the Covid crisis. That farms support around 43% of our workforce.

What are the factors hindering worker’s movement from farm to factories in India?

First, in the absence of a robust manufacturing sector, those who move out of farming mostly find themselves in low-paying construction work and informal services.

Second, in contrast to Bangladesh, we have not had an export boom of low-skill, labour-intensive products. India’s economic growth has been largely services led in contrast. A leap from the primary to the tertiary sector can’t absorb workers in the volumes we need.

Third, India’s growth elasticity of employment is on decline. It is a measure of how output expansion generates jobs. A 10% growth in gross domestic product is associated with only a 1% rise in employment.

Fourth, government has made efforts; like production-linked incentive schemes and efforts to grab the business flite from China. However, the efforts are hindered by legacy issues of poor infrastructure, complex and variable rules, skill deficiencies, hidden costs and more.

Lastly, K-shaped recovery from the covid pandemic has only worsened inequality.

15. [Is the declining rupee a crisis or an opportunity?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Is the declining rupee a crisis or an opportunity?**” published in **The Hindu** on 5th August 2022.

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

Relevance: To understand the challenges with Rupee depreciation.

News: The declining rupee has several consequences. The rupee’s steep slide to the 79-to-a-dollar range is bound to impact importers, widen the current account deficit (CAD) and increase India’s external debt burden.

Must Read: [Explained: What Rs 80 to a dollar means](#)

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Why India will not reap the benefits of the declining rupee?

1) Despite depreciation in the nominal exchange rate, the real exchange rate has not really depreciated in recent times. This means domestic prices are rising faster than international prices. But, this matters for questions of trade balance and exports, **2)** In the last two-three decades, the sensitivity of exports has been weak as far as changes in the real exchange rate are concerned, **3)** The depreciation is concerning because it adds to the inflationary pressure and squeezes the purchasing power of those whose incomes are not linked to the crisis.

Read more: [Using a rupee route to get around a dominating dollar](#)

What are the long-term impacts of rupee depreciation?

1) Forex reserves has now fallen sharply as the import bill remains high and forex resources have depleted. The expectation of depletion of the reserves combined with currency depreciation can lead to instability, **2)** Companies that have ECBs (external commercial borrowing) will face some squeeze in the balance sheets, **3)** The relationship between output and inflation rate termed the Phillips Curve, has been flat and the inflation rate changes for reasons other than demand factors, **4)** So far, the policy measure has been exclusively dependent on monetary policy. Higher interest rates or higher repo rates have an adverse impact on output, which affects GDP growth, **5)** Fiscal policy targets a specific level of debt to GDP ratio, i.e., it targets debt stability, and the job of the monetary policy is to target the output gap and thereby control inflation. Fiscal policy needs to play a role in helping boost demand, but that is not exactly consistent with the present policy framework.

Read more: [External vulnerabilities: Time for a rupee review](#)

What India should do to limit the impacts of rupee depreciation?

a) India needs to find out whether India has adequate flows on the capital side to bridge the CAD, **b)** The RBI has to sell dollars in the spot market to contain the depreciation, **c)** To avoid the East Asian experience in the mid-1990s, the RBI must watch the import cover of forex reserves; The consequent impact on the rupee liquidity is another factor the RBI needs to watch, **d)** The government need to increase corporate tax in some form, to finance additional government expenditures, particularly in compensating labour's income, **e)** India should also rethink fiscal policy rules and must review to what extent rules are relevant and useful in the current context, **f)** The government's outstanding debt is large and increases in interest rates will raise the interest bill. Correcting the government's fiscal imbalances will improve the overall macro atmosphere and offer a positive signal to the external world and provide comfort to investors.

Read more: [Why there is no reason to panic over the rupee](#)

16. [The aircraft and the carrier](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**The aircraft and the carrier**" published in the Business Standard on 5th August 2022.

Syllabus: GS 3 Various Security Forces and their mandate

Relevance: Indian Navy; INS Vikrant

News: The **Cochin Shipyard Ltd.** handed over India's first indigenous aircraft carrier or IAC-1, known as **Indian Naval Ship (INS) Vikrant** to the Indian Navy(IN), which will be commissioned shortly in the IN.

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History of Aircraft Carriers in India

Since independence, India has cumulatively operated three aircraft carriers, the **original INS Vikrant, the INS Viraat, and INS Vikramaditya**. The first two have been decommissioned from the IN.

The **second INS Vikrant**, which will be commissioned soon, will be the fourth aircraft carrier of India.

INS Vikramaditya is still serving the IN. And after commissioning, INS Vikrant (45,000-tonne carrier) will also be the second serviceable carrier.

Issues

First, an aircraft carrier must be able to take enough air wings into battle. However, the only aircraft carrier, **INS Vikramaditya** cannot embark on more than about 25 fighters. Therefore, it can be clearly stated that the Indian Naval Ship is left short of air power in crucial battle spaces and missions.

Second, the types of aircraft in a carrier's air wing and the efficiency with which they can be sustained in battle is the ultimate determinant of a carrier's worth. However, the Indian Navy has ordered the MiG-29K for INS Vikramaditya and IAC-1. The MiG-29K is a poor choice because it will be unable to absorb the **pounding** that carrier-based fighters receive while landing when the **pilot slams** down his fighter at a **precise spot** on the deck so that it can engage a row of arrestor wires that drag the aircraft to a halt.

What should be done?

Therefore, the Indian Navy is pushing hard for the **Indian Aircraft Carrier (IAC) -2 of 65,000-tonne capacity**. Further, the Indian Navy is also pushing for a **flat deck carrier** that is designed and built in India, with **technical** and **tactical consultation** from the US Navy. The IAC-02 would be able to embark some **55 fixed-wing fighters, ASW** and **utility helicopters**, and aircraft like the fixed-wing, radome-equipped E2C Hawkeye for extended maritime domain awareness (MDA) missions.

India and the US have constituted a **Joint Working Group** on aircraft carrier technology cooperation under **the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative**.

Recently, the Indian Navy has sent out a Request for Information for **26 Multi-role carrier-borne fighters (MRCBF)**. The marine version of **Dassault's Rafale fighter**; and **Boeing's F/A-18E/F Super Hornet** are the two aircraft that meet the requirements. *The Super Hornet is the better choice, as is evident from the plethora of disadvantages in buying its rival, the Rafale-Marine.*

First, the Indian Navy specified that it requires eight twin-seat and 18 single-seat fighters. The Rafale-Marine does not come in a twin-seat version. Both configurations are available in the Super Hornet

Second, the Super Hornet would ensure high interoperability between the fighters, the aircraft carrier, and a number of other platforms that the Indian military has already bought, or could do so.

Third, If the Indian Navy does not buy the Super Hornet, it may also be denying itself access to MQ-25 tankers from US carriers in the future. Other interoperable platforms also include **MH-**

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60R Seahawk helicopters, the **P-8I multi-mission maritime aircraft**, and the MQ-25 Stingray autonomous, carrier-borne tankers.

Fourth, If the Indian Navy buys the Super Hornet, the US Navy might also link the availability of EMALS/ AAG from General Atomics for the **next indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC-2)** to the strategic closeness.

Fifth, a Super Hornet sale to India would create a higher degree of **interoperability** with US naval forces in the Indo-Pacific, as well as with the **Quad militaries** as both Australia and the US operate Hornets.

Sixth, the acquisition of Super Hornets would allow the Indian Navy continued access to the most capable **combat aviation assets** in the Indo-Pacific. For example, the US has 11 carriers against only one French and one British carrier.

[17. What the RBI's Financial Stability Report reveals about the banking sector](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**What the RBI's Financial Stability Report reveals about the banking sector**” published in the **Indian Express** on 5th August 2022.

Syllabus: GS 3 Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the growth and development of the Indian Economy; Investment

Relevance: Bank reforms, regulatory reforms, Infrastructure Investment related reforms

News: Recently, the RBI released its latest **Financial Stability Report (FSR)** which talks about the health of the Indian Banking System.

What were the findings of the report?

The RBI has stated that the banking system is healthy, considering the stress of the previous decade. The two key indicators clearly demonstrate the progress in the banking system:

- (1) The Bank's financial situation has been improved by **successive waves of recapitalization**. Therefore, banks have **written off** most of their bad loans. Therefore, they brought down their **gross non-performing loans (NPAs)** from 11% of total advances in 2017-18 to 5.9% in 2021-22.
- (2) Due to the above said **financial turnaround**, the banks have the space to resume their business of **extending credit**.

Why the improvement in banks' financials is a glass half-full picture?

(1) It is still unclear whether the banking system is healthy enough to finance the **strong economic recovery** or **GDP growth**. There are various factors behind it:

(a) Over the last decade, banks have increasingly shifted away from providing credit to **industry** or **financing investment**. Now, banks are lending more to **consumers**. For example, the share of industry in total banking credit has declined from 43% in 2010 to 30% in 2020, and consumer loans have increased from 19% to 29%.

(b) Most of the industry credit/loan has been extended to the **smaller firms or MSMEs**. **For example**, due to the **credit guarantee scheme** in the wake of the pandemic, the loan growth for MSMEs has gone up from 3 percent in 2020 to 31 percent in 2022.

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(3) There has been little lending for **private sector investment** for infrastructure creation. Most of this went for **public sector capital expenditure**. Much of the lending to the private industry has been in the form of working capital loans, necessitated by the increase in commodity prices.

Why is there so little lending for investment by large firms?

There has been a situation of risk aversion on the part of firms and banks in terms of private sector investment:

On the **demand side**, private sector investment has been sluggish for nearly a decade after the **boom-and-bust of the mid-2000s**. The firms have little reason to expand their production facilities.

On the **supply side**, most of the bank loans given during the period 2004-09 for large infrastructure projects turned bad, leading to **high levels of NPAs**. Therefore, banks were unable to extend credit for a decade.

Thus, even when their health improved, they remained wary of lending to large-scale industrial projects, preferring instead to shift to smaller-scale and less risky consumer lending.

Why has the perception of risk aversion not changed even during the post-pandemic recovery?

There is still no framework that will reduce the risk of private sector investment in infrastructure.

The banks do not have a reassurance that in case the NPA problems do develop, the problem will be resolved expeditiously. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code has been plagued by delays and other problems.

Now, there are other issues like heightened **global macroeconomic uncertainty**, growing **geopolitical tensions**, and uncertain recovery prospects of India's domestic economy.

A healthy balance sheet of the banking sector is necessary, but not sufficient for economic growth.

What should be done?

Both banks and firms have to be willing to take on the risk of investment in industry and infrastructure.

Deep structural reforms should be introduced to the infrastructure framework, the resolution process, and management processes at the banks themselves.

18. Breathing LiFE into the climate narrative

Source: The post is based on an article "**Breathing LiFE into the climate narrative**" published in the **Indian Express** on **5th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Ecology and Environment

Relevance: The Concept of Lifestyles for the Environment (LiFE)

News: Recently, the Prime Minister of India launched the concept of "**Lifestyle for the Environment**" (**LiFE**) on June 5, 2022, World Environment Day.

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In November 2021, at the CoP 26 in Glasgow, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in addition to announcing the **panchamrit**, or **five climate-related commitments** of the country, also articulated the **concept of LiFE**.

About the concept of LiFE

It is planned as a **first-of-its-kind global movement** that advocates for “**mindful and deliberate utilization**” by people worldwide, instead of “**mindful and wasteful consumption**”.

It will provide the world with a unique **people-powered platform** to relentlessly focus on bringing individual and collective actions to the core of the climate action narrative.

Objectives

(1) It aims to harness the **power of individual** and **collective** action across the world to address the climate crisis. It aims to nudge individuals and communities to adopt simple and specific climate-friendly behaviors in their daily lifestyles. **For instance**, an individual can carry a reusable cloth bag instead of a plastic bag; walk short distances instead of driving; or turn off electrical appliances when not in use; prioritize public transport wherever possible and take other similar actions.

(2) LiFE aims to activate a global community of “**Pro Planet People**” and steer the world towards a **sustainable model of development**.

Key Component

(1) Consume responsibly: LiFE plans to break down the mental model like Sustainable living and comfortable living are competitors. It will nudge the world to consume responsibly, rather than consuming less.

LiFE will deploy a range of **tested behavioral techniques**, including nudges, social and behavior change communication, and norm influencing to make mindful consumption a mass movement, on which India relied in the recent **jan andolans** such as the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM).

(2) **Produce responsibly:** The LiFE movement’s nudging of the consumption patterns of the society may also go to the extent of leading to responsible production and a sustainable market.

(3) **Live responsibly:** Humans remain at the mercy of the natural world, no matter how much technological progress we make as a global society. This was recently proved during the Covid pandemic.

Why can climate change no longer be an after-thought to the global development agenda?

It has been estimated that the global economy could lose up to 18% of GDP, and India could lose \$6 trillion by 2050 if no climate action is taken.

In India alone, more than 50% of our largely rural workforce will be negatively affected by climate change.

Further, the ongoing climate crisis is already threatening food and water security across the world.

Importance of community and individual actions

According to the **United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP)**, if one billion people out of the total global population of close to eight billion people adopt **eco-friendly behaviours** in their day-to-day lives, then **global carbon emissions** could drop by approx 20%. For Example

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(1) Eco-friendly behaviours include turning off ACs, heaters, and lights when not in use can conserve up to 282 kilowatts of electricity per day.

(2) Avoiding food wastage can reduce an individual's carbon footprint by 370 kg per year.

(3) Reducing one flight trip per year can reduce per capita carbon emissions by 700 to 2,800 kg.

Other pro-planet initiatives around the world

(1) Denmark promotes the use of bicycles by limiting parking within the city centre and providing exclusive bike lanes.

(2) Japan has its unique "walk-to-school" mandate, which has been in practice since the early 1950s.

The Way Forward

India can lead the **global climate debate** by nudging the world towards a new model of sustainable and inclusive development through the **LiFE movement**.

The LiFE movement can play a pivotal role in not merely reversing the effects of climate change, but also mainstreaming a **harmonious** and **mindful way of living**.

The Indian leadership can promote LiFE movement while **presiding as the G20**, a group that covers 60% of the global population, 80% of the global GDP, and 75% of global exports.

19. [About spectrum auction: Dialling right – Government should ensure that exchequer and the public benefit from spectrum sale](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Dialling right – Government should ensure that exchequer and the public benefit from spectrum sale**" published in **The Hindu** on **5th August 2022**.

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

Relevance: About India's spectrum auction.

News: India's latest auction of telecommunications spectrum drew bids exceeding a record ₹1.5 lakh crore in a clear sign that the industry is on the path to recovery.

About the present Spectrum auction

The government has netted just over a third of the ₹4.3 lakh crore reserve price it had set for the spectrum on offer. 71% of the airwaves on the block won bids is a testament to the improvement in the industry's health.

Reliance Jio emerged as the top bidder cornering 48% of the airwaves. Bharti Airtel bid just under half that amount for 39%. The debt-laden Vodafone Idea cornered about a 12% spectrum.

Read more: [Analysing spectrum auction](#)

What were the recent steps that help to improve the telecom sector?

Government steps: The Centre last year eased the regulatory norms around the payment of dues. This includes a four-year moratorium on outstanding payments and the redefinition of adjusted gross revenues to prospectively exclude non-telecom earnings.

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The Government's policy decision to return bank guarantees to telcos helped them to improve their eligibility for debt and increased capital expenditure.

Steps taken by industry: Industry increased tariffs which helped them to lift the average revenue per user at the telecom service providers. Thereby boosting margins.

All this allowed service providers to attract investor interest and spread liabilities over a staggered period.

Read more: [Opportunities and challenges associated with the launch of 5G Spectrum in India](#)

What are the lessons that should be learned from spectrum auction?

The **high reserve price** has dampened enthusiasm for certain spectrum bands. For instance, 3.3 GHz and 26 GHz were bid at the reserve price in several service areas, the 600 MHz was left untouched, and 60% of the 700 MHz spectrum remained unsold.

Note: *The 700MHz spectrum is ideal for rural connectivity as well as signal penetration inside buildings in urban areas.*

Read more: [Auctioning 5G spectrum bands](#)

Hence, the government should price the spectrum in an optimal manner to ensure that both the exchequer and the public at large, including in remote rural corners, benefit from it.

[Sticking to commitments-India must set an example by balancing energy use and climate goals](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Sticking to commitments-India must set an example by balancing energy use and climate goals**" published in **The Hindu** on **6th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

Relevance: About India's updated NDCs.

News: Ahead of the 27th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP 27), in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt the Cabinet has approved India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).

What are India's updated NDCs?

Read more: [Cabinet nod for climate pledges](#)

What is the present state of the Paris Agreement targets?

The 2015 [Paris Agreement](#) requires countries to spell out a pathway to ensure the globe does not heat beyond 2°C, and endeavour to keep it below 1.5°C by 2100. Under the agreement the countries must submit NDCs every five years, mapping what will be done post-2020 to stem fossil-fuel emissions.

But the subsequent COPs are making compromises on the cuts they can undertake over multi-decadal timelines with the least impact on their developmental priorities.

About India's first INDC and India's participation in COPs

India consistently held that the existing climate crisis is largely due to industrialisation by the U.S. and developed European countries since 1850. However, international pressure and clearer evidence of the multi-dimensional impact of climate change have seen India agree to move away from fossil fuels over time.

India's first NDC, in 2015, specified eight targets.

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Read here: [India's INDCs- Progress and Challenges Ahead](#)

At COP 26 in Glasgow in 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid out five commitments, or 'Panchamrit'. But the recent updated NDC is silent on whether India would cut emissions by a billion tons and create carbon sinks.

Must read: [India announces new climate targets at COP26 – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done?

India has expressed its intent, via several legislations, to use energy efficiently and many of its biggest corporations have committed to shifting away from polluting energy sources.

India should not promise more than what it can deliver. As it undermines the moral authority that India brings to future negotiations. India should be an exemplar for balancing energy use, development and meeting climate goals.

20. [Who needs media in New India?](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Who needs media in New India?**” published in the Indian Express on 6th August 2022.

Syllabus: GS 3 Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in Internal Security Challenges etc.

Relevance: Role of Media; Media Freedom

News: The government has ordered the Indian Women's Press Corps (IWPC) to vacate its premises, a 27-year-old institution.

The IWPC was allowed to retain the building based on the Parliament resolution which was passed to express solidarity with the institution. IWPC was allowed to retain the premises, two decades ago, as it had an important role in our democracy.

Role of Media

The media is the fourth pillar and a co-stakeholder in our democracy. Media play's role in guarding against elected representatives and bureaucrats exercising unfettered power and misusing the system.

How government's engagement with media has been changing lately?

The long-established tradition of **sharing information** with journalists is slowly fading in many spheres. Rather, the idea is to maintain a distance and the government will provide its data and findings.

The **Central Hall in Parliament** is now out of bounds for senior journalists. Journalist has been banned since Coronavirus. Further, in the **new Parliament building plan** of the government, there is no provision for a Central Hall, where correspondents could exchange notes with MPs.

The **media's presence in Parliament House** has also been **drastically reduced**. For example, media organisations are now permitted to send only one accredited parliamentary correspondent to cover the Lok Sabha. Further, the number of days for coverage per week is also restricted for journalists.

Further, correspondents with the **Press Information Bureau (PIB) cards** are no longer permitted automatic access to the **North** and **South Block secretariats**. The meeting can be made with a prior appointment.

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Similarly, photographers are not allowed to cover functions in the Durbar and Ashoka Halls and investiture ceremonies in **Rashtrapati Bhavan**.

The government also ended the practice of **taking newsmen** on the Prime Minister's flight. Similarly, the only official media is allowed to be on board the president's and vice president's flights.

There have been few incidents in which the **Enforcement Directorates** has raided media owners.

Issues in the functioning of media

Nowadays, the media does not take **objective editorial stands** on the ongoing issues in Indian politics. They allow spokespersons of different parties to freely express themselves on topical issues.

On television channel debates, people representing **diametrically opposite** views simply shout each other down without any attempt at a dialogue or rational argument.

What are the reasons for such a move?

Earlier governments followed the **liberal approach** that news persons act as a watchdog on politicians, bureaucracy and constitutional bodies.

However, in recent times, the government has adopted **an authoritarian model**. It has taken a dim view of the role of the media in a democracy.

What should be done?

India has a country that is **large, diverse, and stratified, socially and economically**. Therefore, such diversity should be represented in the form of a plurality of opinions in our mainstream television channels and newspapers.

To function freely, the media necessarily needs to remain in contact with those in authority, so that it is in a position to deduce the truth and obtain accurate information on issues of public importance.

21. [Fiscal policy should return to fundamentals](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Fiscal policy should return to fundamentals**" published in the **Business Standard** on **5th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Indian Economy

Relevance: Macroeconomic Conditions; High Inflation

News: Recently, the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank have hiked large interest rates to forcefully bring down inflation.

Some experts are of the opinion that deficit spending needs to play a much more active role in managing business cycles.

Evolution in the use of fiscal and monetary policy in the business cycles?

(1) Before the 2008 global financial crisis, Monetary Policy was the main device to address ordinary business cycles. On the contrary, it was suggested that fiscal policy should play a supporting role, except in the event of wars and natural catastrophes such as pandemics.

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(2) Post-financial crisis 2008: Over the past decade, it has been firmly established that even in normal times, the fiscal policy should also play a more **dominant macroeconomic stabilization**. **Monetary policy** could respond immediately, but it was suggested that **fiscal policy** through taxation and government expenditure should quickly follow and take the lead over time.

It is true that “**helicopter money**” and other **transfer programs** proved extremely effective during the initial stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. These programs helped to cushion individuals while reducing long-term economic scarring.

However, both **monetary** and **fiscal policy** are vital to handle a routine downturn in the economy.

What are the challenges in the conduct of fiscal policy?

The large and politically divided countries, such as the United States or the United Kingdom, have not figured out how to conduct technocratic fiscal policy on a consistent basis. Because politics is hardwired into fiscal policy.

There are **horse-trading** and issues in the implementation of the **fiscal measures** or **transfer programs**. The implementation remains inefficient, and these tend to be bigger as the spending bill increases.

The fiscal measures resulted in increased **inflationary pressures** and reduced capacity to respond to the supply shocks triggered by the war.

What should be done now with high inflation and slowing growth?

(1) Interest rates need to be raised, but not at the pace at which it is happening. This entails a risk of yet another deep recession at the end of 2023

(2) Some mainstream economists believe that public debt could be much bigger without any negative consequences.

What should be done?

The governments should **redistribute** income on a sustainable basis. It should raise taxes on higher-income individuals and increase transfers to lower-income, especially very low-income, segments of the population. Higher taxes on high-income and upper-middle-income individuals will also lead to the achievement of **social cohesion**.

Fiscal policy needs to go back to **fundamentals** and be **recalibrated**. There is a need for the readjustment of macroeconomic policy gradually, as it is important to avoid a deep recession.

22. [Towards a super vaccine](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Towards a super vaccine**” published in **The Times of India** on **6th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 science and technology – new developments in the field of biology

Relevance: Biological Disaster; Monkeypox and Covid-Pandemic

News: On July 23, WHO declared monkeypox a **Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)**, the highest level of alert. Since Covid in February 2020, this is the second such alert in two years.

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[About Monkeypox disease](#)

Nature of Monkeypox

This international monkeypox outbreak is largely restricted to those below 40 years of age, who were born after the smallpox vaccination ended in 1980.

History of Smallpox Vaccine Development

(1) **Ancient Variolation:** It was an ancient method practiced in India, China, and the Orient. This involved introducing a tiny amount of pus from the **smallpox pustule** into the recipient's arm. It produced immunity. Later on, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu introduced it to 18th-century Britain.

(2) In 1763, **John Fewster**, a local surgeon in Gloucestershire, discovered **cross-protection** between cowpox and smallpox. In 1801, **Edward Jenner** understood the implications of this **revolutionary medical advance** of cross-protection, and he predicted that this vaccination would rid the world of smallpox.

(3) In the 1930s, the '**vaccinia viruses**' were used for the development of a smallpox vaccine to eradicate smallpox.

(6) The first-generation smallpox vaccine was made by growing the vaccinia virus in the skin of animals – mostly cows, but also sheep.

(7) The second-generation vaccine used live vaccinia virus grown in eggs or in cell culture, being introduced in the late 1950s and early 1970s, respectively.

(8) A freeze-drying method developed in the early 1950s allowed the vaccine to be stored and transported at room temperature.

(9) Between 1958 and 1977 it was mainly the second-generation vaccine that was used in smallpox eradication programmes.

(10) Third-generation vaccines introduced in the late 1970s are based on a Turkish strain – Modified Vaccinia Ankara (MVA) – which had lost the ability to multiply in humans; it could still be grown well in chicken embryos.

The smallpox-monkeypox vector: Two smallpox vaccines are approved for use against monkeypox.

1) ACAM2000 is a **second-generation vaccine** that includes live vaccinia virus, which replicates in the recipient and has unpleasant side effects.

2) MVA-BN is a **third-generation vaccine**, which uses MVA technology developed in the 1990s and has a better **safety profile**. It is licensed under **three brand names** – Jynneos (US), Imvanex (EU) and Imvamune (Canada).

In 2019 a clinical study showed equivalence between the MVA and ACAM2000 vaccines, with the former showing better post-vaccination safety.

Several studies have established MVA-based candidates to have good efficacy against monkeypox.

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Thereafter, MVA/S was developed. As per a study, MVA/S vaccination produced strong neutralising antibodies and cellular immunity against the **Covid virus**.

The Way Forward

The monkeypox-Covid vector: There are chances that MVA/S may provide protection against both **Covid** and **monkeypox**. Therefore, it can be used to develop a single vaccine that can protect against two diseases that are circulating now and both have been declared as a PHEIC rating.

23. [Explained: as India strengthens its climate targets, a look at the progress so far, what's new](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **“As India strengthens its climate targets, a look at the progress so far, what's new”** published in the **Indian Express** on **6th August 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Ecology and Environment

Relevance: India's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)

News: Recently, India has updated its Nationally determined commitments (NDC) with incorporation of the two of the **five promises**, that were made by the Prime Minister at the Glasgow Summit, into official targets, as part of India's international climate commitments for 2030.

The **2015 Paris Agreement** requires every country to set self-determined climate targets, which have to be progressively updated with more ambitious goals every few years.

(1) India's first **Intended Nationally Determined Commitments (INDC)** were submitted in 2015. It contained three main targets for 2030:

(a) A 33 to 35 percent reduction in emissions intensity (or emissions per unit of GDP) from 2005 levels

(b) At least 40 percent of total electricity generation to come from non-fossil renewable sources

(c) An increase in forest cover to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent

(2) In 2021, the Prime Minister promised to strengthen **India's climate commitments** at the Glasgow meeting. He made 5 promises, and called it the **'Panchamrit'**.

(3) In addition, PM had said that at **least 500 GW** of India's installed electricity generation capacity in 2030 would be based on non-fossil fuel sources, and India would also ensure avoided emissions of at least **one billion tonnes** of carbon dioxide equivalent between now and 2030.

(4) PM Modi had also announced a net zero target for India for the year 2070. It means India would offset its greenhouse gas emissions entirely, either by absorption of carbon dioxide through natural processes like photosynthesis in plants or through physical removal of greenhouse gases using futuristic technologies. But **net-zero** is a **long-term target** and does not qualify to be included in the NDC which seeks **five-to-10-year climate targets** from countries.

What are the newly updated official targets?

* India will now reduce its emission intensity by at least 45 percent, instead of just 33 to 35 percent, from 2005 levels by 2030.

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* Also, it would now ensure that at least 50 percent of its total electricity generation, not just 40 percent, would come from renewable sources by 2030.

What are the reasons for incorporating the two promises incorporated into the new official targets?

India is on its way to achieving its existing **INDC targets** well ahead of the 2030 timeline stipulated in the climate pact.

(1) India's **emissions intensity** was 24% lower than the 2005 levels in the year 2016 itself. It is very likely that the 33 to 35% reduction target has already been achieved, or is very close to being achieved.

(2) The other target of having at least **40% of electricity** coming from **non-fossil fuels** has officially been reached, i.e., **41.5% of India's current installed electricity capacity** of 403 GW is now powered by **non-fossil fuels**. For example, wind, solar, and others renewables energy alone account for more than 28% of this capacity while hydropower contributes over 11 percent.

Which Glasgow commitments have not been converted into official targets by the government?

(1) India's non-fossil fuel electricity generation capacity would touch 500 GW in 2030.

(2) India would cut at least one billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent from its net projected emissions between now and 2030.

What are the reasons for the non-incorporation of the two targets?

(1) It is difficult to achieve the **500 GW non-fossil fuel electricity capacity target** for 2030. Of the current installed capacity of 403 GW, over 236 GW, or 58.5% comes from fossil fuel sources, while non-fossil fuels make up only 167 GW.

To add capacity from non-fossil sources, this would have to triple in the next 10 years to reach the 500 GW target. But, the total installed electricity capacity has more than doubled in the last 10 years

(2) The promise to reduce at least **one billion tonnes** of carbon dioxide equivalent from the cumulative projected emissions till 2030 is problematic. As per, **India's annual projections**, India could be emitting anywhere between 35 and 40 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in total by the year 2030.