



# **9 PM**

# **Compilation**

**12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of December [Second Week] 2022

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# General Studies Paper –1

### General Studies - 1

#### 1. [Census as a mirror of past and present](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Census as a mirror of past and present**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS1- Modern Indian history and Population and associated issues

**Relevance**– Census and its correlation with standards of living.

**News**– The article explains the impact of British policy on population related indicators. It also explains the dimensions of living standard shown by census after 1947.

A recent study of India's experience under colonial rule concludes that between 1880 and 1920 approximately 100 million Indians died due to British policy in India. It is based on the **census of India**.

The **mortality rate** in British India rose steadily after 1881. It recorded an increase of close to 20% by 1921. This suggests that the living conditions worsened during this period. The mortality rate dipped in 1931, which was the last census conducted in British India.

#### **What are the arguments by some school of thoughts that justifies colonial rule ?**

British arguments for the empire include English forms of **land tenure**, the English language, banking, the **common law**, the **limited state**, **representative assemblies**, and the **idea of liberty**.

#### **What are the arguments by Indian economic historians against colonial rule?**

Famines started almost at the onset of rule by the East India Company in Bengal. The **de-industrialisation** happened in India in the nineteenth century. It led to the **drain of wealth**. **Food security** worsened as India's peasants were forced to grow commercial crops for export so that Britain could balance its trade.

#### **What is revealed by the population of India after 1947?**

Population recorded after 1947 points to the fact that lives of Indians improved since the end of colonial rule in **dimensions** other than merely income.

It points to a worsening **gender inequality** in India. A simple indicator of this would be the ratio of females to males in the population. This ratio has steadily declined after 1947. After declining for four decades from 1951, it started inching up in 1991. But in 2011, it was still lower than what it was in 1951.

Even though **life expectancy** increased soon after Independence, in the early years at least it increased faster for men than it did for women.

# General Studies Paper –2



## General Studies - 2

### 1. [What are the existing laws on religious conversions?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**What are the existing laws on religious conversions?**” published in **The Hindu** on **12<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance

**Relevance:** anti-conversion laws and problems associated.

**News:** Charity works are being misused by some communities for religious conversion which is a concern for India.

#### **Which states have laws for conversion?**

**Odisha** became the first state after independence in 1967 to enact a law to stop forceful/fraudulent religious conversion.

Further, in 1968 Madhya Pradesh came up with **Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantraya Adhiniyam Act**. It required the person who converted others to inform the concerned District Magistrate.

Presently, many states have passed anti-conversion laws restricting religious conversions through marriage.

For instance, the **Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021**, says that a marriage would be declared “null and void” if the marriage is solely for that purpose.

Madhya Pradesh also passed a new law in 2021— the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act (**MPFRA**). It makes mandatory for both the individual and the priest facilitating the conversion to inform the District Magistrate prior to the conversion.

These laws also provide for greater punishment for forceful conversion of persons from **Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribe communities, minors and women**.

Currently, more than 10 states have enacted anti-conversions laws. Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Karnataka have passed the laws.

#### **What has been the judicial stand on these laws?**

Many of these laws have been challenged in the court and have been termed as **unconstitutional**. For example, the Himachal Pradesh High Court in 2012 struck down certain provisions of the State’s 2006 law restricting conversions.

The Court said that the individual converting their faith also enjoyed their **right to privacy** and the provision to give a month’s prior notice to the District Magistrate violated this right.

Further, the **Gujarat High Court** stayed some provisions of the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003 in 2021 and even this year, the **Madhya Pradesh High Court** has held certain provisions of the MPFRA unconstitutional.

## 2. PROBLEM ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNDERTRIAL

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Listening to The President Droupadi Murmu: To fix the Under trial problem, ensure four reforms**” published in **The Indian Express** on **12th December 2022**.

**Syllabus: GS2**- Judiciary

**Relevance**– Criminal justice system

**News**– The article explains The under trial of prisoner’s issue was raised by Hon’ble President of India.

### **Who are under trial prisoners?**

Under trial prisoners are those people who are facing trial in any court and during such trials are kept in judicial custody in prison.

In simple terms an under trial prisoner is one who has been arrested for some crime who is waiting to appear before The Magistrate.

### **What is the problem faced by under trials in India?**

- There is no separate prison for undertrials, so with hardened criminals and in the absence of any scientific classification methods of separating them from others, there is a chance of first time and circumstantial offenders to turn into criminals.
- Prisons are often a dangerous place for the first-time offenders who are subjected to group violence and mishandling by the police.
- Due to overcrowding in the prison and shortage of adequate space to lodge prisoners, most of the prisons face problems to keep them in safe and healthy conditions.

### **What are the Reforms suggested by The President of India?**

- Most of the old and colonial penal statutes continue to rule the roost. Post Colonial laws such as Section 124, Section 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of his public function), Section 188 (disobedience to an order lawfully promulgated by a public servant) are examples.
- These are designed mainly to control and repress behaviours that are an outcome of social and economic tensions. It May be better addressed through non-punitive measures.
- The extensive powers to arrest are yet another offshoot of a colonial procedural scheme. It is often adopted today as a sine qua non of good governance. It should be avoided.
- The arrestee’s right to bail is a safety valve that ensures the arrested person a hearing before a judicial agency. But the prevailing criminal justice system is more mythical than real. There is reluctance on parts of courts to provide speedy bail.
- The long pending cases in the courts of the country need to be disposed off quickly.
- The need is for a holistic legislative reform that aims to expand the horizons of individual liberties.

## 3. CHANGES IN THE MULTISTATE COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2022

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**On amending the Cooperative Societies Act**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th December 2022**.

**Syllabus: GS2**- Development process and development industry

**Relevance**– Issues related to cooperative societies

**News**– The article explains Bill introduced in the Lok Sabha on amending the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002, recently.

### **What are Multi State Cooperatives?**



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According to the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), cooperatives are **people-centred** enterprises jointly owned and democratically controlled by and for their members. It realises their common **economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations**.

Multi-State cooperatives are societies that have operations in more than one State — for instance, a farmer-producers organisation which procures grains from farmers from multiple States.

### What are the problems faced by the Multi State Cooperatives?

1. Lack of **checks and balance**
2. Weak **institutional infrastructure** of central registrar
3. Poor management of **grievances redressal system**.

### What are the key changes in the Bill?

4. The amendments have been introduced to improve **governance**, reform the **electoral process**, strengthen **monitoring mechanisms** and enhance **transparency and accountability**.
5. The Bill also seeks to improve the **composition** of the board and ensure **financial discipline**, besides enabling the raising of funds in multi-State cooperative societies.
6. The Bill provides for the creation of a **central Co-operative Election Authority** to supervise the electoral functions of the MSCSs.
7. It also envisages the creation of a **Co-operative Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Fund** for the revival of sick multi-State co-operatives societies.
8. In order to make the governance of multi-State cooperative societies more **democratic**, the Bill has provisions for appointing a Cooperative Information Officer and a Cooperative Ombudsman.

### 4. [Back on track – P.T. Usha can create a road map for India's bid for the Olympics in the 2030s](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Back on track – P.T. Usha can create a road map for India's bid for the Olympics in the 2030s”** published in **The Hindu** on **12<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2 – Sports sector governance.

**Relevance:** About improving India's sports sector.

**News:** Recently, P.T. Usha was appointed as the president of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). She becomes the first woman president of the IOA and was declared elected unopposed for the top post in the polls.

**Note:** *P.T. Usha was a multiple Asian Games gold medallist and fourth-place finisher in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics 400m hurdles final. She is fondly known as the ‘Payyoli Express’.*

What is the significance of the recent IOA election?

**a)** P.T. Usha's election busts the patriarchal inherent in many sports hierarchies across India, **b)** The IOA is an umbrella organisation for sports bodies in India. So, IOA can now deal with sister associations lost in dissent, and **c)** The IOA is expected to create a road map for Olympics in the 2030s.

What are the challenges with the sports sector in India?

**1)** Stadiums are leased out for housing loan expos or music concerts, **2)** Age-fudging and doping are harsh realities for young Indian athletes, **3)** Many Indian athletes try to win medals at the zonal, age-group and national levels just to seek jobs. This is because medals often secure a career opening in public sector units, banks and a few corporates.

**Read more:** [Sports sector in India: Issues and challenges – Explained, Pointwise](#)

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How India is promoting the sports sector in India?

The Government's leaning on the soft power of sports. For instance, the Sports Authority of India's initiatives and corporate-backed academies both promote the soft power of sports.

Now, India is beginning to aspire for gold beyond the Asian realm. Both Neeraj Chopra and Abhinav Bindra's performances in the Olympics are examples that the skill sets are there in India. If support is provided better, then India can win medals at the International level.

**Read more:** [How we can democratise sports governance](#)

### 5. [Get on with Census: Crucial demographic exercise cannot wait for next elections](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Get on with Census: Crucial demographic exercise cannot wait for next elections"** published in the **Business Standard** on **12<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2 – Governance.

**Relevance:** About the delay in Census.

**News:** India's decadal Census exercise has been carried out at the beginning of every decade for over a century — except the current one. It was postponed due to the pandemic, but even after lifting the curbs, there is no effort to restart the Census process.

So, there is an assumption that the Census 2021 will not begin to be conducted until after the next Lok Sabha elections in 2024.

What is the importance of the Census?

**Essential for state governance:** The Census is the **basic building block of many instruments of state policy** that are essential for **a)** The proper provision of goods, **b)** The effectiveness of governance, **c)** Ensuring a fair and just division of expenditure across regions and target groups, **d)** Providing actual enumeration of population characteristics and **e)** Relevant for the division of the pool of taxes across states.

**Supreme over other surveys:** Surveys on households, jobs and other items **can only complement the Census**, not replace it. Further, Census acts as a crucial corrective on such surveys, estimates, and extrapolations.

**Important for welfare state:** For instance, a recent directive from the Supreme Court regarding the distribution of benefits under the National Food Security Act underlines the centrality of the Census to India's welfare mechanisms.

**Read more:** [A census is not about counting sheep – on Issues related to census](#)

How India plans to revamp the census?

The government plans to experiment with the benefits of **digitising part of the process** like that of the US. For instance, the government **notified new methods of enumeration**. This ensures **"self-enumeration"** by the respondents and **electronic submission of data**. This can speed up the Census process.

**Read more:** [Census should not be just data-oriented: House panel](#)

What should be done?

The government should **fast-forward the census collection**. This is because the upcoming elections and delimitation of constituencies in 2027 will further delay the census work. Hence, the government cannot afford to postpone the Census indefinitely.

6. The role of the 'China Test' in India's grand strategy

**Source:** This post is based on the article "The role of the 'China Test' in India's grand strategy" published in **The Hindu** on **12<sup>th</sup> December, 2022**

**Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 2- International Relations – India and its neighborhood**

**Context:** India needs to decide its principal contradiction. As per the article, China is the principal contradiction for India. Therefore, India should check all its strategies through the China test.

**Principle contradiction poses the most intense challenge to an individual/organisation, and has the power to shape its future choices and consequent outcomes.**

All other challenges like Pakistan, internal insurgencies and other neighboring countries are secondary contradictions for India.

Therefore, major decisions in India's strategic decision matrix should pass the **China test**.

**What more can be the elements of China test?**

China test' consists of three distinct elements:

- Assessment of a certain Indian decision or a specific regional development squares with Chinese regional strategy or interests.
- Does India need to modify its decision or a certain regional development due to secondary contradictions.
- An assessment of whether this would require any major policy changes internally.

**How would China-test affect India's relationship with other countries?**

**India-US relations:** China seeks to dominate the Indo-Pacific region. In this light, growing India-U.S. proximity is not its interest and is one of the reasons behind China's aggression. But a **China-Test would suggest that India should not worry about short term implications of poking China, by ignoring its long-term implications.** Therefore, India should maintain the warm relations with US.

**India- Pakistan Relations:** For China, the best case scenario will be India's preoccupation with Pakistan, so that China could focus on dominating the south Asia. However, the China-test suggest that India's objective in South Asia should be to seek a pacification of conflicts with Pakistan, so that it can focus on China.

**Pakistan US relations:** Should India oppose growing proximity of Pakistan with US? India need not oppose the American engagement of Pakistan. It helps prevent Pakistan from going into the China camp completely. A Pakistan engaged with the U.S. and the West is better for India than a Pakistan shunned by the U.S. and the West.

**India-Russia relations:** The U.S. and its allies would like India to stop engaging with Moscow and condemn its aggression against Ukraine — which India has refused to do. So, does continuing its relationship with Moscow help New Delhi better deal with the China challenge, given the growing relationship of Russia-China?

A complete break away from Russia will strengthen Sino-Russian cooperation and cut India out of the continental space to its north and west. India would loss the discounted energy and cheaper defence equipment, benefitting China. Laos, it will not only push Moscow towards Pakistan, but provide China with a growing influence in Central Asia.

7. [Why Parliament must reexamine POCSO](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**“Why Parliament must reexamine POCSO”** published in the **Indian Express** on **13<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**“Go Back To 16 – Response of the criminal justice system to Pocso is reason to revisit the age of consent”** published in **The Times of India** on **13<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About the need for legislative reform on POCSO.

**News:** The CJI asked lawmakers to address the “growing concern” on the **criminalisation of adolescents** engaging in consensual sexual activity under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

What is the POCSO Act?

**Read here:** [POCSO Act](#)

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) raised the age of consent from 16 to 18 in 2012. The Indian Penal Code and other laws were subsequently modified to ensure cohesion with POCSO.

Why the CJI is demanding a legislative reform on POCSO?

The POCSO Act **criminalises all sexual activity for those under the age of 18**, regardless of whether consent is factually present between the two minors in a particular case. Hence, the families of victims are hesitant to file police complaints owing to factors like the slow pace of the criminal justice system and the stigma associated with such cases.

This is highlighted by many high courts. But by invoking the “Romeo-Juliet exception,” many high courts acquit the accused in cases involving consensual sexual activity between minors aged between 16-18 years.

With 253 million adolescents in the country and a social culture that stigmatises independent decisions when it comes to choosing a partner, the CJI demanded a legislative reform on POCSO.

Why does India need a legislative reform on POCSO?

**a)** The National Family Health Survey-5, 2019-21 (NFHS-5) shows 39% of women had their first sexual intercourse before the age of 18 years, **b)** A study by Enfold Proactive Health Trust shows that **1 in four cases under the POCSO Act involve admission of romantic relationships**. Another study on West Bengal, Maharashtra and Assam found that 25% of POCSO listings were romantic cases. **c)** A **draft Bill** specified that statutory rape would be triggered for minors between 16-18 years only in circumstances such as use of force. This was dropped under the Act, **d)** Research suggests that the increase in the threshold of consent to 18 has led to **abuse of the legislation**.

**Read more:** [Historical Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse under POCSO Act](#)

What should be done?

Stakeholder consultation and careful drafting are required to ensure the spirit of POCSO law is upheld. Hence, the Parliament must take notice and reexamine the law.

**Read more:** [The POCSO Act and associated issues](#)



8. Curbing individualism in public health

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Curbing individualism in public health**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Issues related to development and management of health

**Relevance:** Public Healthcare System

**News-** The article explains the need to prioritise society oriented population-based approaches over individual-oriented interventions for public health.

**What is the recent example related to it?**

The **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)** under Ayushman Bharat is the largest health insurance scheme in the country. It covers hospitalisation expenses for a family for ₹5 lakh a year. The entire scheme doesn't talk about the need for hospitalisation services per year for any population.

Instead, every individual is given an assurance that if there is a need for hospitalisation expenses and the scheme will cover the expenses.

**What are the facts associated with it?**

Data from the **National Sample Survey Organisation (75th round)** show that on an average, **only 3% of the total population** in India had an episode of hospitalisation in a year.

The assurance of a service remains an unfulfilled promise when **more than 90%** of those who were given the promise do not need hospitalisation in the near future.

In case of COVID-19, It was also evident that around 20% of the total COVID-19 positive cases needed medical attention, with around 5% needing hospitalisation and around 1%-2% needing intensive care (ICU) or ventilator support.

Most of the deaths due to COVID-19 are a reflection of the failure to offer ventilator and ICU support services to the 1%-2% in desperate need of it. The **morbidity profile of a population** across age groups is an important criterion used to plan the curative care needs of a population.

What it means is that for population-level planning, the **need of the population as a single unit** needs to be considered.

**What are the reasons for the dominance of individualism in public health?**

The first is the **dominance of biomedical knowledge and philosophy** in the field of public health. It leads to the misconception that what is done at an individual level, when done at a population level, becomes public health.

The **visibility** of health impacts among the general public is a big reason. Health effects are more visible and appear convincing at the individual level.

the **market's role and the effect of consumerism** in public health influence the choices of people. The beneficiaries for a programme become the maximum when 100% of the population is targeted.

**What is the way forward?**

All forms of **individualistic approaches** in public health need to be resisted to safeguard its original principles of practice, population, prevention, and social justice.

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### 9. [India-UK free trade deal will be good to businesses and consumers in both countries](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**India-UK free trade deal will be good to businesses and consumers in both countries**” published in **The Indian Express** on **13<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** benefits of Free Trade Agreement between India and the UK.

**News:** India and the UK are the two largest economies of the world. A Free Trade Agreements (FTA) between the two would further benefit both the economies.

**How will the free trade agreement benefit both the nations?**

**Lower Prices:** It would help in providing multiple choice to Indian consumers along with providing lower prices of British manufactured products.

**Environmental Benefits:** PM Modi has asked the Indian Businesses to export products around the world with “**zero-effect, zero-defect**”. This means exporting high-quality goods with no environmental impact. An FTA would help in achieving this.

**Providing Market:** It would help Indian firms by providing a market in the UK where they can sell their goods and services.

**Expertise:** India’s economy is growing and the UK can provide its expertise in the different fields including SMEs to further give a boost to the economic growth of India.

**Investments:** It would also help to empower the India-UK investment boom and increase investment in each other’s economy.

**What are the concerns?**

There are concerns of slow global economic growth, impact of pandemic on the supply chain and volatile markets to the current trade agreement.

However, despite these concerns it is expected that FTA would help in boosting ties between the two nations.

### 10. [Politics of national renewal](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article “**Politics of national renewal**” published in **The Hindu** on **13<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Polity

**Relevance:** Democracy related issues.

**News-** The article explains the issues related to Indian democracy and the need to renew the spirit of democracy.

**What is the current situation of our evolving democracy?**

A report by the **Pew Research Center on social hostilities** distressingly **ranks India first**. On several indices, our **democratic deficit** needs urgent introspection, even as we celebrate the resilience of our elective processes.

An economy in which the **top 10% hold 77% of the nation’s wealth** is not in sync with foundational principles of an egalitarian democracy.

**Abandonment of civil conversation** on the core challenges is a sign of flailing democracy.

A political culture which promotes unfettered abuse, ignorance, egotism and reflexive bigotry across parties has disabled the nation from reaping the full dividends of a constitutional state.



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Politics that thrives on **persecution of adversaries** in an abuse of the state's coercive processes negates the essence of justice.

**Opposition's compulsive disdain** for every action of the government regardless of its intrinsic merit has weakened its credibility as a countervailing democratic force.

The concentration of power in executive hands has unsettled **institutional power equations**.

**What are the solutions to renew our democracy?**

We can rescue our democracy as long as the freedoms are valued in our hearts.

**Search for leadership is critical** who are driven by a big cause rather than being **self-centered**.

We must **restore humility** in democratic politics. **Gandhian tradition of politics** that emphasizes the importance of means to achieve political goals, is the need of the day.

Our democracy must **address a flawed system** that enables manufactured consent, manipulated majorities and perversion of the ends of democratic politics.

The decline of democratic institutions can be arrested through a **politics of national renewal** based on **reasoned conversations and a collective political assertion** in favour of freedom over fear, **inclusion over exclusion and justice over injustice**.

There is a need for **politics of accommodation and conciliation** inspired by political magnanimity and honesty of purpose.

### 11. [Weighing in on the efficacy of female leadership in government](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Weighing in on the efficacy of female leadership in government**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Indian polity. GS1- Social empowerment

**Relevance**– Women in politics

**News**– The article explains the issues of women in Indian politics. It also explains the effectiveness of women leadership.

**What shows the effectiveness of women leadership?**

**Germany, Taiwan and New Zealand** have women heading their governments. These three countries seem to have managed the pandemic much better than their neighbours.

A detailed recent study by researchers in the United States reports that States which have **female governors** had fewer COVID-19 related deaths.

However, it is not right to make **generalisations** based on these studies. The important takeaway from such studies is the necessity of getting rid of inherent **biases and perceptions** about female effectiveness in leadership roles.

**What are the impacts of women reservation in panchayats?**

They perform significantly better than men in implementing policies that promote the interests of women.

A study was conducted in 1993 to test the **effectiveness of female leadership**. It concluded that pradhans invested more in **rural infrastructure** that served better the needs of their own gender. **For instance**, women pradhans were more likely to invest in providing easy access to drinking water since the collection of drinking water is primarily the responsibility of women.

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### What are some successful initiatives in India for increasing women representation in politics?

Women were allowed to vote from 1950 onwards. This is in striking contrast to the experience in the so-called “**mature democracies**” of western Europe and the United States. We have had and have charismatic female leaders like Indira Gandhi, Jayalalitha, Mayawati, Sushma Swaraj and Mamata Banerjee among several others.

### What are challenges to women representation in politics?

The **female representation** in central and state governments is still low. Female members make up only about 10% of the total ministerial strength.

The **underrepresentation of women in Indian legislatures** is even more striking. The 2019 election sent the largest number of women to the Lok Sabha. Despite this, women constitute just over 14% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha.

According to the **Inter-Parliamentary Union**, India has a dismal rank of 143 out of 192 countries on women representation in legislature.

Attempts have also been made to extend quotas for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies through a **Women's Reservation Bill**. Male members from several parties opposed the Bill on various pretexts. Both the NDA and United Progressive Alliance governments have reintroduced the Bill in successive Parliaments, but without any success.

### What is the way forward to increase women's representation in politics?

It is essential to create a **level-playing field** through appropriate legal measures. The establishment of quotas for women is an obvious answer. Such quotas have both a **short-term and long-term impact**.

### 12. [A resource crunch need not hurt our soft power](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**A resource crunch need not hurt our soft power**” published in **Live Mint** on **14<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** ways to utilize India's soft power

**News:** The parliamentary committee on external affairs has tabled the report titled “**India's Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy: Prospects & Limitations**”. The report contains recommendations on ways to utilize India's soft powers along with conventional diplomacy.

### What are the key findings of the report?

There has not been an adequate attempt from the government despite having a vast number of soft resources (fine and performing arts, literature, cuisine, traditional medicine, etc.) towards fulfilling policy goals.

The reports highlighted various reasons behind this such as **lack of inter-ministerial coordination and resources**.

### What can be the way ahead?

India's G20 presidency is a great opportunity to showcase its soft power to the world. India also faces a shortage of funds to utilize its soft resources. Therefore, the following options can be adopted as an alternative –

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**First**, India is the world's largest democracy. Therefore, its soft power should not be limited to sharing only election best-practices. It should also extend to sharing of other better practices such as the **framework of democratic institutions** which counter-balance executive overreach.

**Second, private sectors** should be involved to fill the gaps left by official agencies. This includes the involvement of **India Inc** to partner with the government in sharing India's inexhaustible talent pool with the rest of the world.

### 13. Flare-up at Tawang marks shortcomings of India's China diplomacy

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Flare-up at Tawang marks shortcomings of India's China diplomacy**” published in **The Indian Express** on **14th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- India and neighbourhood relations

**Relevance**– India and China relations

**News**– The article explains the issues of frequent border clashes between India and China.

#### What has been the Chinese behaviour towards India in recent years?

In 2013, at **Depsang** in Ladakh, Chinese troops came across the LAC. They pitched tents and refused to move for several weeks until New Delhi threatened to cancel the planned visit of Premier Li Keqiang to India.

In September 2014, the Chinese intruded at **Chumar** in Ladakh. It happened in the middle of Chinese President Xi Jinping's first state visit to India.

In 2017, China provoked India with infrastructure development in Bhutan's **Doklam territory**. Finally, in 2020, the Chinese PLA took advantage of pandemic and a lack of Indian military alertness to **transgress** across multiple locations on the LAC in eastern Ladakh.

The **2005 Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles** between the two countries was a landmark treaty on the boundary dispute. It seemed to set **benchmarks for the eventual resolution** of the boundary dispute.

But in 2006, the Chinese Foreign Minister declared that the status of **Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh** was far from settled. It explicitly contradicts the principles outlined in the 2005 treaty.

#### What is the Chinese strategy behind these transgressions and subsequent resolution?

**Negotiations** by China were a strategy for buying time.

China has used the buying time to increase the **economic gap** between itself and India. In the intervening years, it built up more **infrastructure** in its border provinces.

It also tried to **integrate** these regions much more closely with neighbouring economies such as Pakistan and Nepal through grand projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative and pressuring Thimphu to open formal diplomatic ties with Beijing.

The **subsequent resolution** achieved over several rounds of **military-to-military talks** after each confrontation between the two sides appears to institutionalise a system of “**buffer zones**”. It actually undermines the advantages of India's **infrastructure build-up** more than they do China's build-up.

It could be concluded that the Chinese are also setting the pace to a large extent on the **resolution** of ongoing tensions at the LAC.

#### What may be the consequences of the current Indian approach?

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The kind of approach that allows the general public to ignore the looming **China challenge** before the country. It allows the Indian military to **escape accountability** for Galwan, and India from being seen as a **credible challenger** to China by other countries.

### 14. [The attack on the last bastion — the judiciary](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The attack on the last bastion — the judiciary**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Judiciary

**Relevance**– Challenges faced by higher judiciary

**News**– The article explains the issue of judicial appointments. It also explains the lack of executive accountability in India these days.

Recently, the Vice-President Law Minister, Kiren Rijiju commented on the working of higher judiciary.

#### **What is the position of executive today?**

Today, there exists a lack of **executive accountability**. Since 2014, the Government has undertaken a **well-crafted and deliberate** takedown of various **institutions and mechanisms** that could hold the executive accountable.

There are attempts to undermine the **independence** of the judiciary.

Parallels can be drawn with ‘**elected autocracies**’, where elected governments use the institutions to kill democracy and destroy **civil liberties**. Institutions like National Human Rights Commission, ECI and Information Commission have been made dormant.

**Investigation agencies** are misused against activists, journalists, students, political opponents, or anyone who protests against the government. Academia, the press, and civil society have also been **systematically suppressed**. Universities are under attack. Media operates mostly as a propaganda machine.

#### **What has been the practice of judicial appointment in our country?**

In the early years of modern India, decisions on judicial appointments were usually made on the **advice of the CJI**. Even if **concurrence** was not contemplated, an **independent judiciary** was non-negotiable.

Both the Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi governments attempted to manipulate the process. The **collegium** was created as a historical response to these challenges. It succeeded in preventing the executive from hijacking judicial appointments.

The **NJAC law** could have fixed this problem. But it had many flaws that were structured to undermine judicial independence. The SC went for striking down the law.

#### **What are the challenges faced by the higher judiciary?**

The government is not willing to **cooperate, let alone consult**, with the Supreme Court. Names proposed by the collegium are left pending for years.

The judiciary faces the problem of **pendency of cases and vacancies of judges**. Pendency is caused majorly by **poor judicial infrastructure**.

Since the Supreme Court’s decision in 2015 on the NJAC Act, the judiciary has remained passive. However, with the last three CJIs, the Court is being more assertive and speaking in a non-aligned and confident voice.



**What is the way forward for improving the system of judicial appointment?**

The appointments system must be fixed. There is a need for a **clear, rule-based system**. Even the existing collegium system can be improved.

It can be done through **well-defined criteria** for appointments, **transparency and accountability** in selection, better methods of assessing candidates for elevation, and improved ways of ensuring **diversity and representation**.

In the long term, the government should strive for **well-structured and balanced legislation** on a **judicial commission** that brings in **transparency** without compromising **judicial independence**.

15. [India- China boundary conflict](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**What Yangtse Means**” published in **The Times of India** and “**Tawang incident should drive home the urgency of army modernisation, reconsideration of ill-conceived Agnipath**” published in **The Indian Express** on **15th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- India and neighbourhood relations

**Relevance**– India and Chinese relationship

**News**– The article explains the issue of frequent border conflicts between India and China.

Recently, there was a serious clash between Indian and Chinese troops at Yangtse near Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh.

**What are the probable reasons for the increasing confrontation on LAC?**

**Lack of clarification on LAC**– LAC has not been **jointly delineated or demarcated** by India and China. In some parts of this mountainous geography, each side’s perception of the LAC is different from the other’s.

There are pockets where these conceptions **overlap**. Yangtse is one such pocket where Indian and Chinese **perceptions** of the LAC differ.

**Buffer zones**– Another reason is creation of buffer zones. The area in between is currently not patrolled by either side at least until the two sides agree to a **methodology** for such patrols.

**Expansion of territory**– It indicates a **pre-planned operation** to exploit a window of opportunity. The intent seems to have been to seize the post in an area claimed by the Chinese. The LAC would have been permanently altered.

The Tawang incident was not the outcome of a **local initiative**. This operation could have only been conceived at the **highest levels** in China.

**What are the larger strategic dimensions of Chinese strategy?**

**Political dimension**– The LAC is a political issue in China. Politically, even a small victory over the Indian Army through **salami slicing**, could have diverted attention from China’s **internal economic and social turmoil**.

**Geopolitics**– This incident must also be viewed against a larger canvas. It may be the **political messaging** of retaliation against the recent Indo-US military exercises.

It could also have been designed to force a postponement of the IAF exercises to be conducted in the east shortly. Such activities could enable the Chinese to increase its presence in the Indian Ocean Region by diverting India’s attention.

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**Strategic prioritisation**– The apparent priority for China is **annexing Taiwan**. However, annexing Taiwan militarily requires extensive **training and resources**. It is also a major **political risk**. The chances of immediate military action against Taiwan are low.

In contrast, military action along the LAC with India can be undertaken at a time and place of China's choice, with fewer resources and calibrated for maximum effect. The **political risks** are low. Therefore, India is the greater priority for China from a military perspective.

**Why have such incidents of physical contact between troops of each side become more frequent?**

China has improved the **infrastructure** on its side to such an extent that the PLA is able to move its troops to the very limits of its claimed territory at quick speeds.

The PLA has been instructed by its leadership to protect every inch of Chinese territory in a proactive manner.

China and its military troops are not merely more **assertive**, they are also more **aggressive**.

**infrastructure on the Indian side** has also improved greatly and the Indian army too is able to move troops and equipment to the border faster than ever before.

But the terrain on the Indian side is higher mountains where both road building as well as transporting men and material are very difficult.

The Chinese side has the Tibetan plateau where both infrastructure development as well as transportation is far less difficult.

**Why is China not willing for demarcation of LAC?**

There is fear on the Chinese side that once there is a common idea of where the LAC lies, this line would then become the **de-facto boundary** between the two countries. It may be unacceptable to them.

They desire to achieve such a result **unilaterally**, through use of force. This is exactly what they attempted in eastern Ladakh.

**What is the level of India's defence preparedness for Chinese aggression?**

Our **jointness and theatrisation** initiatives seem to be lagging despite the new CDS. Our modernisation programmes appear episodic.

The **strategic partnership plan** to produce submarines has hit a roadblock. The requirement of a lightweight tank for high altitudes is still on paper. There seems to be no **comprehensive plan** for firepower enhancement.

The difference between the PLA and Indian troops is evident in this incident.

**What is the way forward for India?**

India needs to **rethink national security** and focus **holistically** on the clear and present threat of China.

It needs to rethink the ill-planned **Agnipath scheme** on an emergency basis.



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16. [Unnecessary Mystery: Judges recusing from cases without specifying reasons hurts the entire judiciary. SC must frame rules](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Unnecessary Mystery

**Judges recusing from cases without specifying reasons hurts the entire judiciary. SC**

**must frame rules”** published in **The Times of India** on **14<sup>th</sup> November 2022**. **Syllabus:** GS –

2 – Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary. **Relevance:**

About the recusal of judges.

**News:** Many times Supreme Court or high court judges recuse themselves from cases. Recently, a judge recused from hearing Bilkis Bano’s challenge against the premature release of 11 murder-gangrape convicts.

What is the recusal of judges?

Recusal is the removal of oneself as a judge or policymaker in a particular matter. Ordinarily judges recuse over conflict of interest. However, often judges don’t give reasons for recusal.

**Must read:** [Explained: How judges recuse from cases, and why](#)

What are the concerns associated with the recusal of judges?

**a)** Judges recusing from cases without specifying reasons hurts the entire judiciary, **b)** The frequency of recusal pleas are also growing recently. For instance, rarely a month passes without a judge recusing in Bombay HC.

What should be done to reduce recusal of judges?

-A judicial order would make recusal legally contestable at a higher forum but “**procedural and substantive rules**” were needed.

-Judges should state their reasons for recusal from the cases. Every judge would have to comply to this.

If these changes are implemented, the entire judicial system would greatly benefit from the resultant transparency.

17. [The silent revolution of Nari Shakti](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “The silent revolution of Nari Shakti” published in the **Indian Express** on **15<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About the Nari Shakti.

**News:** On the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> year of India’s independence, the Prime Minister articulated a bold vision that in the coming 25 years, “Nari Shakti” would play a vital role in India’s socio-economic developmental journey.

**Note:** Kena Upanishad from ancient times mentions that it was the goddess Uma who enlightened the three powerful but ignorant gods, Indra, Vayu, and Agni, to the profound mystery of Brahman.

How is Nari Shakti empowering India at present?

At present, micro and silent revolutions are reasserting the power of Nari Shakti.

**Increase in voter turnout:** Private research on women voters using historical data has revealed that since 2010, the gender gap in voter turnout has diminished significantly and the recent trends show women voter turnout often exceeds male voter turnout. This is even witnessed in less developed regions of the country also.

The significance of this silent revolution is **a)** women voters can no longer be marginalised or neglected, **b)** Women voters demand respect and command attention, **c)** Compelled political

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entrepreneurs and grounded leaders to design policies addressing issues that women care about. This is visible from recent poverty reduction programs that are based on amenities such as cooking fuel, sanitation, water, and electricity, and **d)** Compelled political parties to make law and order a critical political issue in the less developed regions.

**Increase in women contesting elections:** In the 1950s, in the state assembly elections, women contested elections in approximately 7% of the constituencies, but by the 2010s, women were competing in 54% of the constituencies.

The significance of this revolution is it creates a bottom-up revolution in India and holds lessons for other countries.

**Must read:** [\[Kurukshetra November Summary\] S&T: Towards Women Empowerment](#)

What are the challenges faced by Nari Shakti?

**Women employment:** According to World Bank data, the **female labour force participation rate has declined** from 32% in 2005 to 19% in 2022. Further, the data does **not consider unpaid domestic services**. Working women also face double burdens from work and domestic work.

**Rising population and its burden on Nari Shakti:** Fertility rates have declined dramatically below the replacement rate, the share of the ageing population has increased, and there is an alarming increase in the percentage of kinless elderly.

The care industry is labour-intensive and, therefore, subject to **Baumol Cost Disease**, implying that the cost of providing care would keep rising over time.

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

What should be done to improve the contribution of Nari Shakti?

**Account domestic services:** A private study reveals that women in the age group of 25 to 59 years spend approximately seven hours daily in unpaid domestic services. If this is accounted then **a)** The level of India's GDP would be significantly higher, and **b)** A truer picture of women's economic contribution would emerge.

**Care industry lessons for India from advanced economies:** India should encourage men to share the burden of unpaid domestic services. This would require a break from tradition and the creation of new modern narratives and myths.

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

When the rest of the world is experiencing a “democratic recession”, India is on track to improve the participation of Nari Shakti and make democracy more progressive.

### 18. [Reflections on the fading principle of non-intervention](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Reflections on the fading principle of non-intervention**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Separation of powers

**Relevance**– Issues related to working of the constitution

**News**– The article explains the viewpoints on separation of powers put up by the President and Vice-President in their respective speeches.

**What are the main excerpts from the President's speech?**

The Constitution outlines a map for **good governance**. The most crucial feature in this is the **doctrine of separation of functions and powers** of the three Organs of the State.

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It has been the **hallmark of our Republic** that the three organs have respected the boundaries set in place by the Constitution. She cautions all organs against **excessive zeal** which may lead to **transgressing the boundaries** set for them by the Constitution.

### What are the main excerpts from the President's speech?

Democracy blossoms when its three organs adhere to their **respective domains**. The **Doctrine of Separation of Powers**, is realised when Legislature, Judiciary and Executive optimally function in tandem and togetherness.

Any incursion by one in the domain of another has the potential to **upset the governance**. We are indeed faced with this grim reality of **frequent incursions**.

Mr. Dhankhar basically focused on the Supreme Court's decision to strike down the **99th Constitutional Amendment** for setting up the NJAC. He did not find the same as not being in consonance with doctrine of '**Basic Structure**' of the Constitution.

He stated that we need to bear in mind that in **democratic governance**, the basis of any 'Basic Structure' is the primacy of the mandate of the people reflected in the Parliament. Parliament is the exclusive and ultimate determinative of the **architecture of the Constitution**.

### What do these events signify?

The office of the Republic's President is above politics. The Vice-President has to be fundamentally above politics too. Vice-president can only enter that arena when she has to exercise a **casting vote** in Rajya Sabha.

In the past, Vice-President's have, in their addresses outside the House, given views on public policies. Mr. Dhankhar's comments on NJAC also tends to give an impression that he has raised questions of the long-settled matter of the ambit of Parliament's powers to **amend the Constitution**.

As the matter is **sub judice**, it would be improper to comment on the issues. Each organ should respect their boundaries. Political class should not **intervene** in judges' appointments.

### [19. Is the RTI Act fulfilling its purpose?](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article "**Is the RTI Act fulfilling its purpose?**" published in **The Hindu** on **16th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Important aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability

**Relevance**– Issues related to Good governance

**News**– The article explains the issues related to working of the RTI regime.

### Is the RTI Act fulfilling its purpose?

It has been one of the most **empowering legislations** for people because it puts an obligation on the government to respond to them in a **time-bound manner** and to get them information to hold the government **accountable**. The law has tilted the **balance of power** in favour of those governed.

A majority of the RTI applications are filed by people who are asking about their **basic rights and entitlements**. So it has fulfilled its purpose to that extent.

People have used the RTI law to know what is happening with **taxpayers' money**. This has enabled them to expose big-ticket scams such as the Adarsh, Commonwealth Games and Vyapam scams. They've also been able to expose **human rights violations**, and then force **accountability** in those cases as well.

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The Act is still **effective** despite the widespread attempts to dilute its efficacy. Officers still think twice before replying to an RTI query, which reflects the seriousness with which it is taken.

### Do you have to be an RTI expert to know how to properly file questions?

The law basically ensures that there is no **set format** in which an RTI application has to be filed. It's a fairly straightforward, simple process. A very large percentage of RTI applications are filed by the poorest and the most marginalised.

But when one asks for **complex information** on large scams or cases of violations of the law or human rights, it has to be framed in a very detailed manner. Here **expertise** is required.

There are other issues related to RTI filing. If you file an application in Odisha, they have a **particular format** for filing. These sorts of rules create hindrances for people. There are some States where you can only file an RTI application within 150 words. **Condensing** the question becomes a challenge.

### What are the challenges faced by the RTI Act?

**Resistance by bureaucracy**– The public information officers these days use excuses like this division does not have the information. So now they are putting the **liability** on the applicant to find out which officer and which office will hold that information.

**Resistance to sharing of information**– Within the government, asking for information is not encouraged. Government departments do not maintain **datasets and information**. They are reluctant to put information in the public domain. The **2021 census** hasn't happened, and the government is now saying it's been indefinitely postponed.

**Dilution of law**– Successive governments have tried to whittle down this law. It began with the **United Progressive Alliance** itself. State governments have tried and are still trying to do it.

Two biggest and successful attempts have been made by the **National Democratic Alliance** government. Once in 2019, and the second now, by way of the **Data Protection Bill** which will most likely pass.

**Vacancies**– We have huge vacancies in information commissions. It means that appeals and complaints keep pending.

### How will the Data Protection Bill will undermine the RTI Act?

The Data Protection Bill will set up a system of amending the RTI law in a manner that all **personal information** will be exempted.

The entire **proactive disclosure scheme** provided for under the RTI Act may be completely undermined.

## 20. [The Indian Innovation That Can Change the World](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The Indian Innovation That Can Change The World**” published in **The Times of India** on **16<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance

**Relevance:** Digital revolution in India

**News:** The first two decades of the 21st century saw the tech giant Google, Amazon, Meta coming up with innovation and value creation in the market. However, India has taken a unique path for its development.

### What path has been taken by India for development?



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India has adopted Digital Public Infrastructure (**DPI**) in its governance. This has enabled India to lead the world and reduce the digital divide.

These public digital platforms are open source, have open APIs (application programming interfaces), open standards for interoperability and leverage public data for innovation.

These low cost and inclusive platforms are based on principles of **consent-based data sharing** and reduce the digital divide. They also create a **level playing field** through regulatory framework.

The platforms included in DPI are – **JAM trinity** which links Aadhaar, mobiles and bank accounts, **DigiLocker** for digital storage and documents, **Bharat Bill Pay**, etc.

These platforms are based on **principles of openness, equity, inclusivity, fairness, transparency and trust**. India has also been able to solve the challenge of **digital inclusion** with these platforms.

**For example**, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (**PMJDY**) has seen an increase in the number of accounts operated by women from 15% to 56%, and 67% of the account holders are from rural and semi-urban areas. The average deposit per account has gone up by 71%.

A recent study by the **Bank for International Settlements (BIS)** highlighted that India has made a remarkable progress in digital public infrastructure.

It is expected that this digital infrastructure will act as an economic divide amongst the nations of the world in the coming future.

Further, it has also led to development of top-class payment products on top of UPI like PhonePe, GPay, etc.

### **What is the future innovation being taken by India?**

India is now democratising e-commerce through interoperability, i.e., the launch of **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)**.

ONDC will provide access and equity to small and medium-sized merchants, increasing choice and quality for customers, and ensure competitiveness and efficiency across the value chain.

It will revolutionize the transaction of people, empower MSMEs and provide with greater negotiation options. It will also help in **democratising** the digital platform to Indian retailers who have stayed away from it.

### **What can be the course of action?**

India is taking over the **G20 presidency** and it is a great platform for India to create a complete package of these digital platforms and deliver them as **an end-to-end e-governance service** to digitally transform the world.

### 21. Line of Actual Control: Past tense, present uncertain

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Line of Actual Control: Past tense, present uncertain**” published in **The Indian Express** on **16<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** India – China border dispute

**News:** The article discusses the border dispute between India and China and the dispute of Tawang.

### **What is the current issue between the two countries?**

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China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of the Tibet Autonomous Region and describes it as south Tibet. It views Tawang as an area of strategic importance for its control over Tibet and its Buddhist leadership.

Further, India and China have **differing perceptions of the LAC** at many places.

However, **Tawang** appeared as an **agreed disputed point** unlike Gogra, Hot Springs and Galwan where no overlapping has taken place.

Further, there has been a **marginal increase** in patrolling by the PLA in some areas. Chinese were also building **housing infrastructure** close to the LAC on their side which has enabled higher troop presence.

### **What has been the past disputes between India and China over McMahon Line?**

India has always considered McMahon line as a settled boundary between the two nations but China rejects this border as it is a **colonial border line** imposed by the British India.

China offered India at the time of **Nehru in 1960** that it would recognize McMahon Line if India accept the Chinese control of **Aksai Chin** but India rejected the offer.

Another offer was later given at the time of Indira Gandhi in 1982 to recognize the McMahon Line in exchange for India accepting the **Chinese claims in Ladakh**.

This kind of multiple offers given by China and rejection by India has caused border disputes from 1962 till today. However, in 1985, China specified that it wanted Tawang as a means of settling the border dispute.

### **What are the counter measures being adopted by India?**

India has taken several steps to counter the Chinese troops at the border.

**For example**, the **Sela Pass tunnel project** is being developed by the Border Road Organisation. It will provide all-weather connectivity between Tezpur in Assam and Tawang.

A 1,500-km **Frontier Highway project** is also coming up. It will run from Tawang in the west to Vijaynagar in east Arunachal along the state's frontier with China.

The infrastructure expansion in Arunachal Pradesh is taking place along **five verticals**: habitat, aviation, road infrastructure, operational logistics and security infrastructure.

**Surveillance has also increased** with deployment of ground-based cameras with night vision ability, surveillance drones, long distance surveillance UAVs, and better communication systems.

### **What is the way ahead?**

Tawang is a major Buddhist pilgrimage centre. The Buddhist monastery in Tawang is **India's biggest monastery**.

It is also one of 33 assembly segments in the West Arunachal Pradesh parliamentary constituency which has been represented in every Indian parliament since 1950.

Therefore, India should try to resolve the border disputes with talks, negotiations and dialogues. However, it also needs to be prepared for any kind of emergencies.



22. [Kota's student suicides: A mismatch between rising aspirations, shrinking opportunities](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Kota's student suicides: A mismatch between rising aspirations, shrinking opportunities"** published in the **Indian Express** on **16<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About student suicides in India.

**News:** Recently, three students, in separate incidents, in Kota, Rajasthan had committed suicide. This highlights the **pressure cooker atmosphere** created in coaching centres.

The combination of a large population of young people with rising aspirations and an economy with shrinking opportunities has created a public health crisis that requires urgent attention.

About students suicides in India

The National Crime Records Bureau's **Accidental Deaths and Suicide in India report 2021** show that the number of students deaths by suicide rose by 4.5% in 2021. Students from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu committed more suicides. The report also mentioned that student suicides have been rising steadily for the last five years.

About short-sighted recommendations to prevent student suicides in India

Indian Institute of Science's reported **replacing ceiling fans in hostel rooms with wall-mounted ones** to prevent suicides.

The guidelines issued by the Board of Intermediate Education in Andhra Pradesh in 2017 to ease the pressure on students recommended **including yoga and physical exercise classes** and **maintaining a healthy student-teacher ratio**.

What can be done to reduce student suicides in India?

India should **address the larger issue of a punishing education system**. India should accept that the education system of today is simply not designed to support young minds or prepare them for today's economic realities.

India should learn from past failures to **address the growing crisis and take urgent steps that involve all stakeholders** — students, parents, teachers, institutes and policy makers.

India should fully **realise the vision contained in the New Education Policy 2020**, offering greater academic flexibility to reduce the pressure on students.

23. [About tribal rights: How We Treat Our First Citizens](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"How We Treat Our First Citizens"** published in **The Times of India** on **16<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About tribal rights.

**News:** Tribals are still targeted by laws that evoke British Raj prejudice

What was the opinion of the constitutional assembly on Tribal rights?

Ambedkar opposed any reservation for tribal persons in legislatures because he felt that "they had not developed any political sense to make the best use of their political opportunities."

Nehru, on the other hand, disagreed with the thoughts of Ambedkar and said that "Every care should be taken in protecting the tribal areas, those unfortunate brethren of ours who are backward through no fault of theirs."

**Read more: [Adivasis at bottom rung of India's development pyramid, finds Tribal Development Report 2022](#)**

How tribal rights are ignored even today?

**Firstly**, there are many **pre-Independence laws that exhibit prejudice towards tribals and continue to remain in force**. For example, The Sonthal Parganas Act of 1855 was still remains in force. The Act was enacted as a response to the Santhal uprising against the East India Company.

The Act excludes certain districts in the erstwhile Bengal Presidency from the application of the 'general Regulations and Acts of Government'. The Act is based on a simple premise – Santhals are too 'uncivilised' a people to be governed by the legal system.

**Secondly, protectionism and prejudice continue with post-independence laws** also. For example, the Habitual Offenders' Model Bill of 1952 replaced the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 and served as the basis for state-level Habitual Offenders' Acts.

With the repeal of this Act, the 'criminal tribes' came to be 'de-notified'. In almost every state where Habitual Offenders' Acts are in force, individuals belonging to the de-notified tribes have been disproportionately targeted.

**Thirdly, the old colonial idea of primitivism continues** under the impression of protecting cultural autonomy. The Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution lay out a set of special provisions for tribal areas.

Under this, **governors are empowered to prevent** or modify the application of both central and state laws to these scheduled areas. These areas were previously 'typically and really backward tracts' under the Government of India Act, 1919 and '**partially and wholly excluded areas**' under the Government of India Act, 1935.

**Read more: [Dilemma of tribal rights and forest conservation](#)**

How India's approach to tribal rights can be changed?

The duty of the government is to **address the social and educational backwardness** affecting members of the tribal population. It cannot be done by protection or assimilation, but with **respect and equality**.

#### 24. [Bangladesh: A cautionary tale](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Bangladesh: A cautionary tale**" published in the **Business Standard** on **16<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About economic crisis in Bangladesh.

**News:** Economic difficulties in Bangladesh are exposing the political flaws within the country.

About the iconic economic growth of Bangladesh

For the past decade and a half, Bangladesh has been powering economic growth by **linking its democratic dividend to global supply chains**, especially for readymade garments.

From being one of the **world's poorest nations at independence in 1971**, the country has **reached middle-income status** and is headed to **exit the United Nations' Least Developed Countries list** by 2026.

For example, **a)** Poverty has declined from 43.5% in 1991 to 14.3%, **b)** Human development indicators outmatch most of its peers, especially in terms of women's workforce participation and empowerment.

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What is the present status of Bangladesh's economy?

Bangladesh two years ago faced a **balance of payments crisis**. This made Bangladesh to **approach the International Monetary Fund** for a \$4.5-billion bailout package. This made it the third South Asian nation to do so in the recent past.

**Read more:** [India, Bangladesh establish contact as more Kuki-Chin refugees are expected to enter MizBangladesh: A cautionary tale m](#)

What is the reason for the economic crisis in Bangladesh?

-Due to the **pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine**, global demand has been crimped and Bangladesh has seen a surge in inflation.

-Bangladesh's economy has **overwhelming reliance on a single item** which is Ready-made garments. These garments alone account for over 80% of its exports.

-There is an **absence of a dynamic domestic economy** built on a wider economic base, skilled labour, and efficient infrastructure.

-**Political reasons:** This is one of the key structural limitations of Bangladesh. The present government was in power since 2009 and follows an authoritarian nature such as being intolerant of criticism, etc.

There have been accusations of electoral fraud, extra-judicial killings of critics, a rigged judiciary, and arbitrary arrests.

**Read more:** [India-Bangladesh ties, a model for bilateral cooperation](#)

What can be done to overcome the economic crisis in Bangladesh?

The need for stable institutions, a robust social security system, implementation of rule of law, and general good governance can make the environment conducive to business investment. This can stabilise the economy in the long run.

### 25. [A familiar script along the border](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**A familiar script along the border**" published in the **Business Standard** on **16<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About India – China conflict and opacity in government information while confronting China.

**News:** A clash between India and China occurred again this month at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Yangtse area of Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh.

About the clash at LAC

**Read here:** [The new India-China Tawang crisis: Where, why, and what now](#)

What is the Chinese strategy behind these transgressions and subsequent resolutions?

**Read here:** [Flare-up at Tawang marks shortcomings of India's China diplomacy](#)

About the opacity in government information while confronting China

Three days after the occurrence of the incident, a video has been leaked in the media. On the following day only, the government briefed the incident at a "high-level meeting".

When the clash in Galwan happened in 2020, that information was also not released as it should have been and when it should have been.

What is the reason for opacity in government information while confronting China?

The Indian government might have not been informed about the conflict due to reasons such as

**1)** The army might thought that this clash was not important enough to report to the political establishment, **2)** The army might briefed previously, and held the second meeting something

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purely for media consumption, and **3)** The government did not intend to communicate that the clash had happened to the people, and was forced to act only because the report leaked.

A British newspaper reported that “**India is covering up the true extent of border clashes with China** to avoid panicking the public,” and that “**army officers are under strict instructions to keep quiet** about the regular clashes between Indian and Chinese troops.”

About the historical opacity in government information while confronting China Jawaharlal Nehru knew that the border on both the western sector (Ladakh) and eastern sector (Arunachal Pradesh) was problematic. He felt that the population— the Indian people— would not accept anything other than the lines that the maps showed, even though these were lines the Indian government unilaterally drew.

So, even after the 1962 war, India chose opacity. Nehru’s papers were hidden away as was the report on the war with China. Material that is important to understand why the war happened in the first place and the background to the border and its cartography is still not completely accessible.

How India can gain from transparency in government information while confronting China? Transparency can expand India’s options because it will enable the full use of our democratic power.

### 26. We are all responsible for the coaching centre-driven anxiety

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**We are all responsible for the coaching centre-driven anxiety**” published in **The Indian Express** on **17th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Development and management of education

**Relevance**– Challenges faced by education sector

**News**– The article explains the issues related to the coaching industry in India that is expanding at a very fast pace.

#### **What are the reasons for the expansion of the coaching industry?**

India represents a **hyper-competitive and over-populated society**. There is a **complete mismatch** between the overflow of job aspirants seeking medical or technical education and real opportunities.

For the aspiring middle class this sort of education seems to be the only capital for **upward social mobility**.

There is **scarcity of jobs** for those who seek to pursue liberal arts and social sciences.

There exists a **nexus** between the education mafia and the political class. It taps this anxiety and existential insecurity for spreading the chains of coaching centres and Ed-Tech companies is a big issue.

#### **What is the way forward to reduce dependence on coaching?**

**Improvement in education**– Teachers of educational institutes must regain our **agency**. They need to articulate **critical and life-affirming voices** through our innovative **pedagogical practices**, and open the windows of consciousness of young students.

Schools must assert their confidence through a vibrant culture of **engaged pedagogy**.

There is a need to question the supremacy of this **life-killing standardised tests** that serve the purpose of **eliminating** people rather than finding genuinely inclined students.



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**Parents responsibility**– Parents also need some **introspection**. They should not interfere or impose their authority on children.

They must realise that children are not investments — a raw material transformed into a **polished product** with placement offers. Children's **real happiness** lies in experimenting, looking at themselves, and pursuing what they are inclined to.

**Political accountability**– We must hold the political class **accountable** for the steady decline of educational institutions and **management quota and capitation fee** charged by educational institutions.

### 27. Court vacations: What are arguments for and against judges taking breaks?

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Court vacations: What are arguments for and against judges taking breaks?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **17<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About court vacations.

**News:** Earlier, Union Law Minister criticised the judiciary for taking long vacations even as pending cases rise to record levels every year. In response, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) has recently said that the Supreme Court will not have a vacation bench when it breaks next week for its annual winter vacation.

What are court vacations?

The Indian Supreme Court has the highest caseload among the apex courts around the world and also works the most. In terms of the number of judgments delivered the Indian Supreme Court leads the way.

The Supreme Court has 193 working days a year for its judicial functioning, while the High Courts function for approximately 210 days, and trial courts for 245 days.

The Supreme Court breaks for its **annual summer vacation** which is typically for seven weeks — it starts at the end of May, and the court reopens in July. The court takes a **week-long break each for Dussehra and Diwali**, and two weeks at the end of December.

High Courts have the power to structure their calendars according to the service rules.

**Note:** *In the UK, High Courts and Courts of Appeals sit for 185-190 days in a year.*

What happens to important cases during court vacations?

The combination of two or three judges, called “vacation benches”, hear important cases when the court is in recess. Cases such as bail, eviction, etc. often find precedence in listing before vacation benches.

What are the arguments in favour of court vacations?

The arguments in support of court vacations are **1) Lawyers and judges profession that demands intellectual rigour and long working hours. So, vacations are much needed for rejuvenation, 2) Judges utilise the vacation to write judgments, 3) Except on rare occasions like family tragedies or health issues, judges do not take leave of absence like other working professionals when the court is in session and 4) Data show that the Supreme Court roughly disposes of the same number of cases as are instituted before it in a calendar year. The issue of pendency relates largely to legacy cases** that need to be tackled systemically.

What are the various recommendations to reduce court vacations?

For an ordinary litigant, the vacation means further unavoidable delays in listing cases.

-In 2000, the **Justice Malimath Committee**, set up to recommend reforms in the criminal justice system, suggested that **a) The period of vacation should be reduced by 21 days, keeping**

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in mind the long pendency of cases, and **b)** The Supreme Court should work for 206 days, and High Courts for 231 days every year.

–**230th report of the Law Commission of India in 2009**: Justice A R Lakshmanan headed the commission. It recommended that the higher judiciary must be curtailed by at least 10 to 15 days and the court working hours should be extended by at least half an hour.

In 2014, when the pendency of cases hit the 2 crore mark, then **CJI R M Lodha** suggested keeping the Supreme Court, High Courts, and trial courts open around the year. The proposal did not see the light of day.



# General Studies Paper – 3

### General Studies - 3

1. [Delhi, Mumbai ... Poor air quality is a problem that's countrywide. Solutions cannot be state specific](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Delhi, Mumbai ... Poor air quality is a problem that's countrywide. Solutions cannot be state specific**” published in **The Times of India** on **12<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment

**Relevance:** concerns associated with air pollution and measures required to be adopted.

**News:** Air pollution in India is often seen as a challenge confined to the Indo-Gangetic Plain (IGP) airshed. However, this is not always true. Coastal cities such as Mumbai and Chennai have also recorded air quality index readings worse than Delhi.

#### What are the key findings of the various reports?

The **World Air Quality Report** this year showed that out of 50 global cities with toxic air, 35 are located in India.

The **Global Burden of Disease Study** in 2019 estimated that 18% of deaths in 2019 in India were due to air pollution.

Moreover, within India, it's the **poorer states** across IGP which experienced the largest increase in pollution. This means that **vulnerable sections** of the population are more prone to health hazards caused due to pollution.

Further, low air quality also decelerates **economic growth**. **World Bank's** cross-country data for 25 years (1990-2015) shows that China and Vietnam recorded a higher average GDP per capita growth with a smaller change in mean annual PM 2. 5.

#### What are the concerns with the current policies?

The major pollutant amongst all air pollutants is PM 2. 5. It is the most damaging and arises from many sources such as dust. Therefore, tackling air pollution in India can no longer be seen as a localised solution.

India's current policy approach to improve air quality has been city-centric. It won't work because the source of the problem is an airshed which represents a common geographic area of pollutants.

#### What is the way ahead?

India needs to change its focus to **geographical airshed**. It will help in changing the nature of incentives offered by public policy.

Therefore, looking at the impact of pollution on **health and on the economy**, the government should come up with a solution that provides a robust solution.

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### 2. [Price distortions in fertilisers will not help farming in the long run. Govt can offer acreage-based cash transfers](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Price distortions in fertilisers will not help farming in the long run. Govt can offer acreage-based cash transfers**” published in the **Indian Express** on **12<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices.

**Relevance:** About India’s fertilizer consumption.

**News:** Both the Soil Health Card scheme and mandatory neem-coating of urea are aimed to promote the balanced use of fertilisers. However, the annual consumption of this nitrogenous fertiliser has only risen from 30 to 35 million tonnes (mt) in the last five years.

What India’s recent fertilizer consumption denotes?

**Increased Urea and DAP:** The sale of urea went up by 3.7% during April-October over the period 2021. The consumption of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) also increased to 16.9% over the same time.

**Decrease in other fertilizers:** Sales of all other fertilisers — including complexes containing nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), K (potash) and sulphur (S) in different proportions – have reduced over the same time.

**Farmers not balancing the use of fertilizers:** This denotes that Indian farmers are effectively applying just urea and DAP — both high-analysis fertilisers containing 46% N and P respectively.

**Must read:** [The current costs of fertilizers in India are unsustainably high to bear for a mineral resource-poor country](#)

Why there is little incentive for farmers to buy other fertilizers?

The government has fixed the maximum retail price (MRP) of urea and DAP is around Rs.6000 and Rs.27000 respectively. But the government informally fixed MRPs at Rs 29,000-31,000 and Rs 34,000 per tonne for NPKS complexes and muriate of potash (MOP) respectively.

All this makes **a)** Increased use of DAP as it has 46% P as well as 18% N, and **b)** The current NPK ratio is about 13:5:1, as against the ideal 4:2:1.

**Read more:** [PM inaugurated One Nation One Fertilizer Scheme](#)

What should be done to ensure balanced fertilizer consumption?

**1)** The government should **replace subsidies on individual fertiliser products** with a flat per-hectare cash transfer, maybe twice a year, **2)** **Create every farmer an e-wallet account** into which the cash transfer can be credited before the kharif and rabi planting seasons. Further, the e-wallet may be used only for the purchase of fertilisers, and **3)** The government can **maintain a stock of basic fertilisers**, including urea and DAP, to keep the price rise in check even in a decontrol scenario.

### 3. [Funding reality check for India’s dream to achieve net-zero by 2070](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Funding reality check for India’s dream to achieve net-zero by 2070**” published in the **Business Standard** on **12<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About decarbonising the Indian economy.

**News:** India lacks the capital to meet its net-zero carbon emissions target by 2070. Decarbonising the Indian economy by 2050 may cost as much as \$12.1 trillion.

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About Norway's ambitious plan to decarbonising the economy

Norway announced the world's biggest carbon capture and storage (CCS) scheme to make Oslo the carbon sink for Europe's industrial emitters. The transport and storage part of the project will connect continental European CO2 emitters to offshore storage sites on the Norwegian Shelf.

The first phase of the plan is expected by 2024. Phase 1 aims to collect 1.5 million tonnes (MT) of CO2 from industrial emitters, and permanently store the carbon at 2,600 metres under the seabed. Phase 2 aims to quadruple phase 1's capacity.

**Note:** ONGC also sought a similar CCS project in India under the seabed off the coast of Gujarat.

**Read more:** [Net zero transition for \\$7 trillion](#)

What are the challenges in decarbonising the Indian economy?

**a)** Lack of **cost-competitive technology alternatives** in India, **b)** The government is **silent on financially supporting** any decarbonisation efforts, except an Rs.100 billion subsidy scheme for EVs, **c)** India is home to some of the world's most polluting cities led by Delhi. Despite that, the **outlay for the environment ministry** is only Rs70 billion, **d)** India's **renewable energy companies** have raised only around \$6.8 billion in debt from offshore capital markets since January 2021. This is **less than 2%** of India's annual decarbonising costs, **e)** Last year, the green bond issuance in India was a mere \$750 million, **f)** In 2021 India's renewable sector attracted only \$12-\$15 billion in investment. Further, funding costs are the largest expense for renewable projects and **g)** Indian banks are reluctant to provide funds for decarbonisation. For instance, India's biggest bank, SBI, rarely funds commercial and industrial renewable projects.

Overall, traditional domestic and foreign sources and debt capital markets will not be able to fund the massive investments needed for decarbonising and they have limited access to foreign capital on concessional terms.

**Read more:** [India's Strategy for Net Zero – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to decarbonise the Indian economy?

-India should **facilitate access to low-cost, long-term and diversified capital** to facilitate decarbonising the Indian industry.

-Accelerating **investments from sovereign wealth funds** which typically have a low cost of funding and represent a more patient investor is critical. For example, Singapore, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Canada have created such funds.

-India can **shift tax revenues from fossil fuel sales to emissions** and **implement a carbon pricing policy** that increases the direct taxes on emissions from nil to Rs6,000 a tonne by 2050.

-India can mobilise capital for decarbonisation projects by **making them as priority sector lending**.

-Renewable projects are an easier way for corporates to reach net zero. Hence, **emission reduction projects should be funded by banks**.

#### 4. [COP27: A mirage in the desert](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article **"COP27: A mirage in the desert"** published in **Business Standard** on **12<sup>th</sup> December, 2022**

**Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 3- Climate Change**

**Context:** COP27 that concluded recently in the Egyptian coastal city of Sharm el-Sheikh. It has not made any gains which were expected of this summit. The article talks about the failures of COP-27.

**How the COP-27 can be tagged as an under-performer?**



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**First, loss and damage fund** has been one of the decisions. The plan says that it will establish institutional arrangements for addressing loss and damage. It will catalyse technical assistance to developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

However, the only decision in this regard has been that by 2023, it will select the host country for the secretariat. **There has been no decision on who will pay for funds, which countries are particularly vulnerable that will receive the funds.**

Even though natural disasters reach catastrophic levels and deeply damage people and economies, there is no clear framework to stop it.

**Second**, the summit was agreeing on differentiating between the white and black fossil fuels. But at the last moment, it changed it to the term “low-emission energy” in the clean energy mix. It was done to provide acceptance to energy sources like natural gas, which emit half the carbon dioxide of coal. It is against the goal of deep decarbonisation.

### **How rule-based system of climate governance can solve the problem?**

Rule-based governance was going against big polluters. So, this idea was dropped in the 2015 Paris Agreement. Now, there is no agreed way to differentiate between the polluters, and this gives a country like China a free pass.

However, a **rule-based system of climate governance** is the need of the hour. It is a simple proposition, that should be well established in law, that the country responsible for the pollution must pay. IN this scenario, it will be well-understood that a country like India would also contribute to the fund, if it has crossed, certain agreed threshold of greenhouse gas emissions.

### 5. [Why the central government should stop funding the power distribution sector](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Why the central government should stop funding the power distribution sector**” published in the **Indian Express** on **13<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – Energy.

**Relevance:** About aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses.

**News:** The Power Finance Corporation has reported that the aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses of discoms have gone up from 20.7% in 2019-20 to 22.3% in 2020-21.

What are aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses?

The AT&C estimate gives an idea of the losses a distribution company (discom) faces in its line of business. If a discom has received 100 units of power, the AT&C figure will tell how many units are not recovered in terms of revenue. For example, a figure of 25% would mean that for every 100 units of power fed into the discom, 25 units are not recovered.

Generally, commercial losses largely imply theft, faulty meters, meters being manipulated or bypassed, etc. Some technical losses are inevitable in a distribution system, but these can vary a lot across discoms (roughly between 4 to 12%) depending on the technology.

**Must read:** [DISCOM sector in India: Challenges & solutions – Explained, pointwise](#)

About India's AT&C losses and schemes to reduce them

The Indian distribution system has always faced high AT&C losses in excess of 30% in the early 2000s. The AT&C figure was 26.6% in 2011-12. It has come down to 22.3% in 2020-21 (Only a little less than half a per cent a year). It ranges from 4.5% (Daman and Diu) to 60% (Nagaland power department).

The major states where the AT&C figures are higher than the national average include Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh.

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Due to this **a)** Discoms became financially weak and made it economically unviable, and **b)** To meet the revenue gap, discoms borrow money from banks leading to a very high-interest burden.

So, the government introduced

**Accelerated power distribution scheme (APDP):** Under this, the government, has been trying to lower AT&C losses by **providing grants/cheap loans** to discoms to improve their distribution infrastructure and also for the installation of smart meters.

Many versions of the scheme have been attempted. For instance, in 2022, a budgetary outlay of about Rs 3 trillion was earmarked for aiding the distribution sector.

**Read more: [Power tariff revisions and the state of DISCOMs](#)**

Why are AT&C losses not coming down?

1) **Work culture** issue in public discoms, 2) **Lack of consumer indexing:** All end consumers get their supply from some identified distribution transformer (DT). Each DT is under the supervision of one person who is held accountable for losses (meaning theft) from his DT. In most public discoms, no one knows which consumer is attached to which DT (implying a lack of indexing).

What should be done to reduce AT&C losses?

If the AT&C losses come down to 15% (the target in several government policy documents) from 23%, additional revenue of about Rs 50,000 crore may be generated. For this,

**India needs proper indexing:** For example, the Delhi discoms have reduced AT&C losses from 50% (in 2002) to somewhere between 7 to 8% today.

**Strict stand from the Centre:** The central government provided the money, but the states fail to reduce AT&C losses so far. Hence, the centre should **stop funding the distribution sector** and leave it to the states to clear the issue.

This will force the state governments to **enhance retail tariffs** along with reducing losses.

### 6. [We will need to find our own sources of climate finance](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**We will need to find our own sources of climate finance**” published in the **Livemint** on **13<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About climate finance.

**News:** The agreement to create a loss and damage fund might largely trickle in through concessional loans instead of proper funding.

What is the present state of climate finance?

According to the **OECD’s climate finance trends report 2022**, of the targeted \$100 billion aggregate climate funding, about \$83 billion was mobilized from developed nations via global agencies through 2020. Among these, concessional and non-concessional loans stood at 71%, grants at 26% and equity at 2%.

Of these, private climate finance and export credit extended via agencies comprised just \$15 billion.

**Thematic split of \$83 billion:** **a)** Majority of the funds are invested in climate **mitigation activities** (\$49 billion) focused mainly on cleaner energy and transport, **b)** After that about \$28 billion was spent in **climate adaptation**, mainly for agriculture, water supply, forestry restoration, coastal fishing and sanitation.

**Regions:** Asia (42% of the 2020 total), Africa (26%) and Latin America (17%).

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**Must read:** [Climate Finance: Meaning, Need and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why does the world need to work on climate finance?

The adaption finance needs of developing countries will gallop to \$340 billion annually by 2030. For instance, India alone will have to install around \$250 billion worth of renewables by 2030.

**Small and medium-sized enterprises and local communities** are left out of major government plans such as India's long-term Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS).

**Must read:** [Climate Reparation: Loss and Damage – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to improve climate finance in India?

**Focus on sustainability:** For that, India's credit curve requires a different approach that **rewards entities seeking to build resilience** through sustainability.

**Improve banking access:** Indian banks should be nudged to **lock in long-tenure, low-cost private climate capital** from alternative sources, like overseas investor institutions, private philanthropy, CSR budgets, etc. They should be incentivized to **lend cheaper loans to diverse businesses**.

**Encourage new climate technologies:** This can be done by nurturing finance instruments and venture capitalists.

**Bridge urban-rural divide in climate finance:** This can be done by providing low coupon sustainability-linked bank loans or overdraft facilities at the entity level.

Delineated projects of larger companies or well-rated special-purpose vehicles should meet **pre-set mitigation specifications** and has to be encouraged to raise funds through domestic financial institutions (DFIs), project financiers and private and sovereign green bonds.

**Read more:** [Funding reality check for India's dream to achieve net-zero by 2070](#)

### 7. [Fixing India's airports: It needs more world-class terminals](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Fixing India's airports: It needs more world-class terminals**" published in the **Business Standard** on **13<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – Infrastructure.

**Relevance:** About the present condition of Indian airports.

**News:** Recent visit of the Union Civil Aviation Minister to Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) has resulted in few minor changes to processes at the airport. A large proportion of the plan consists of asking airlines to cancel or move flights. But this is not a sustainable solution.

What are the challenges faced by Indian Airports?

-Despite various attempts to increase airport capacity, the ability of India's terminals to absorb passenger growth is lacking.

-**Poor processes, customer-unfriendly approach, and additional red tape** have reduced effective airport capacity in recent years.

-There is **not enough manpower** and **checkpoints are poorly manned**. So, additional checkpoints are being introduced. This resulted in long queues for passengers. For instance, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has not assigned enough manpower.

-**Under-provision of infrastructure:** For example, the newly built airport for north Goa at Mopa is supposed to be able to handle only 4.4 million passengers a year. This is less than the number of passengers passing through another airport at Dabolim currently.



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–**Low terminal count:** Soon, Delhi and Mumbai will both be among the 10 busiest airports in the world. Their global peers have half a dozen terminals to aid passenger movements. On the other hand, Delhi has only one world-class terminal, Terminal 3, and that is now more than 10 years old.

What should be done to improve the smooth functioning of Indian Airports?

**Improve manpower:** This has to be done from immigration officials to the CISF to the airport authority to operators to ground-handling companies to airlines

**Improve capacity:** Like their global peers, all metropolitan cities in India should have at least two airports with at least six to seven terminals among them.

Further, India should create a long-term plan for airport sustainability.

### 8. [Big Tech and the need in India for ex-ante regulation](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Big Tech and the need in India for ex-ante regulation**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian economy

**Relevance**– Issue related to market distortions

**News**– The article explains the issue of market dominance by big tech companies in the digital space in context of the **Competition (Amendment) Bill**.

The Competition Commission of India recently imposed a penalty of 1,337.76 crore rupees on Google for abusing its dominant position in the android mobile device ecosystem.

#### **What is the Competition Commission of India?**

It was set up under the Indian Competition Act 2002. The objective was to protect and promote competition in markets, and prevent practices that hinder competition.

#### **What are market dominance practices by big tech companies that need to be delta by regulators?**

In any free economy, **market dominance** is natural. But it becomes problematic when it is abused to prevent competition. The intent of Google’s business was to make users on its platforms abide by its **revenue-earning service**. The **network effects**, along with a **status quo bias**, created significant **entry barriers** for competitors to enter or operate in the markets concerned. Competition laws are too slow to respond in complex technical sectors.

**Predatory pricing** is another issue. It is the lowering of prices that forces other firms to be out competed. Amazon and Flipkart were accused of **deep discounting**. It is essential to establish an ex-ante framework to ensure a level playing field for local sellers.

There are concerns related to **bundling of services** especially with pre-installed apps. The manufacturers eliminate competition without the consumer’s consent. Apple is facing heat in the U.S. and Europe over pre-installed apps. So, Indian competition laws need to be vigilant.

The regulation has not dealt effectively with the evolving **data economy**. There is **sensitive data** stored on these platforms. Big corporations have asserted ownership of the right to use or transfer this data without restriction. The storage and collection of women’s and children’s data need to be dealt with more cautiously to build a **safe digital place**.

Finally, market distortion can also lead to poorer quality of services, data monopoly, and stifle innovation.

#### **What is the way forward for the new bill?**



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There is a need to establish **harmony** of the Competition law with the new Consumer Protection Act 2020 and e-commerce rules. The new law should include a mechanism to ensure **fair compensation** for consumers who face the brunt of the **anti-competitive practices** of the Big Techs.

India is now on the cusp of a **digital transformation**. The **Competition Act of 2000**, was largely constituted to deal with the physical marketplace. There is an urgent need to contextualize the law to the digital marketplace and devise new provisions with adequate **ex-ante legislation**.

It is equally important to contextualize **India's reality**. Kirana stores competing with e-retailers such as Big Basket is an example of unfair competition between legacy businesses and their digital counterparts.

In such a setting, pushing for an **EU-based approach** to competition might not be the best way for Indian marketplace interests in protecting the local digital economy.

India needs a new **ex-ante-based framework** that promotes competition by ensuring a **level-playing field** for the big, the small, the old and the new.

### 9. [Ready for the worst – Governments and agencies have shown better preparedness for cyclones](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Ready for the worst – Governments and agencies have shown better preparedness for cyclones**” published in **The Hindu** on **13<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Disaster Management

**Relevance:** measures needed to reduce the impact of cyclones

**News:** Cyclone Mandous did not cause much damage to the people of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh even though it led to heavy rainfall.

#### **What were the reasons behind less damage by the cyclone?**

It was the response of the government official that controlled and guided the disaster management that lessened the impact of the cyclone.

The Tamil Nadu government has been paying greater attention in improving the **storm-water drain network** and such other works. This was one of the reasons that many areas were not flooded.

The State government's coordination with the Meteorological Department and its preparedness in tackling the **post-landfall situation** made a difference to the situation this time.

**Technology** also played a key role in forecasting and in the circulation of the information.

#### **What is the way ahead?**

There is a need for the State government and the Meteorological department to **coordinate** and work together by leveraging **technology, resources** and improving the **functioning** to lessen the impact of cyclones in the future.

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### 10. [What AIIMS Server “Hijack” tells Us About Cyber Security](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**What AIIMS Server “Hijack” Tells Us About Cyber Security**” published in **The Times of India** on **14<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Security

**Relevance:** concerns with the ransomware attacks

**News:** There was a ransomware attack on the servers of AIIMS recently. This attack has raised concerns over the safety of citizen’s personal data stored online in Aadhaar database.

**What is a ransomware attack?**

**Read here:** [Are ransomware attacks increasing in India?](#)

**What are the concerns?**

Ransomware attacks have been increasing these days. The efforts of moving India into **Digital India** raise concerns after looking at the current cyber-attack on the AIIMS and that also without a comprehensive cyber security plan.

Further, the **Aadhaar database** which contains the information of citizens online is also vulnerable to cyber-attacks.

GoI and the state governments proceeded to adopt Aadhaar-based technology despite the **Supreme Court** ruling against making Aadhaar registration mandatory.

Today, Aadhaar is used at various places and it has been made mandatory for availing various services. This increases the risk of getting exposed to any such cyber-attacks in the future even though the government argues that it is safe.

**What is the way ahead?**

There is a need for establishing a **Cyber Security Board** with the government and private sector as participants.

This board should have the authority to recommend and strategize the plan for keeping the government’s data safe online and prevent any future cyber-attacks.

### 11. [A conservation Bill that endangers forest rights](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article “**A conservation Bill that endangers forest rights**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environment conservation

**Relevance–** Issues related to wildlife protection

**News–** The article explains the criminalisation laws used for conservation of the ecosystem by government agencies. It also explains the impact of criminalisation on forest rights.

**What is the WPA and amendment proposed in this act?**

The **Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972** has safeguarded numerous species of wild animals and plants by prohibiting all forms of hunting.

It has created inviolate areas where **wildlife conservation** may be carried out. The amendment further invests in this conception of protected areas and species by bringing in newer species to be protected.

**What has been the impact of criminal laws to assist wildlife conservation through WPA?**

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It has led to creation of **Protected Areas** where conservation can be undertaken without the interference of local forest-dwelling communities. State and Forest Department control over forests would not have been possible without criminal law.

Pitting wildlife species against communities as human-animal conflict has eluded the true cost of criminalization under the WPA.

The recent move to increase penalties by four times for general violations should raise questions about the nature of policing that the WPA engenders.

A study by the **Criminal Justice and Police Accountability Project** in MP found that persons from oppressed caste communities such as Scheduled Tribes and other forest-dwelling communities form the majority of accused persons in wildlife-related crimes.

The Forest Department was found to use the **threat of criminalisation** to force cooperation. It used this for devising a system of using community members as informants and drawing on their loyalty by employing them on a daily wage basis. Over 95% of the cases filed by the Forest Department are still pending.

Criminal cases filed by the department are rarely **compounded** since they are meant to create a **'deterrent effect'** by instilling fear in communities. Fear is a crucial way in which the department **mediates governance** in protected areas.

**How are forest rights impacted by WPA?** Forest rights as part of the Forest Rights Act were put in place to correct the injustice meted out by **forest governance laws** in recognising forest-dependent livelihoods.

The FRA has been made subservient to the WPA, thereby impeding its **implementation**.

Field work was carried out in **Kanha National Park**. It was noticed that individual forest rights in **buffer zones** of the Kanha National Park of Madhya Pradesh were recognised. The same cannot be said of collective rights. Fishing, which forms an important part of subsistence for tribal communities, has come to be regularly criminalised as part of the WPA.

**Unchecked discretionary policing** allowed by the WPA and other forest legislations have stunted the **emancipatory potential** of the FRA.

### 12. [The rise of rural manufacturing](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“The rise of rural manufacturing”** published in **The Hindu** on **14th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth

**Relevance**– Issues related to manufacturing sector

**News**– The article explains the issue of manufacturing shift to rural areas.

#### **Is manufacturing shifting to rural areas?**

The movement of manufacturing away from urban locations was brought out by the **Work Bank** in a report a decade ago. It found that manufacturing plants in the formal sector are moving away from urban areas and into rural locations, while the informal sector is moving from rural to urban locations”.

Recent data from the **Annual Survey of Industries for 2019-20**, shows that the rural segment is a significant contributor to the manufacturing sector's output. 42% of factories and 62% of fixed capital exists in the rural side. In terms of employment, it accounted for 44%.

#### **Why is manufacturing shifting to rural areas?**

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Rural areas have generally been more attractive to manufacturing firms because **wages, property, and land costs** are all lower than in most metropolitan areas.

There exist floor **space supply constraints** in urban areas. However, the driving force behind such a shift is the continuing displacement of labour by machinery as a result of the capital investments in new production technologies. In cities, factories just cannot be expanded as opposed to rural areas.

There exist **production cost differentials**. Many firms experience substantially higher operating costs in cities than in rural areas. It has inevitable consequences for the firm's profitability and competitiveness.

Another reason is the possibility of **capital restructuring**. Big firms deliberately shift production from cities to take advantage of the availability of less skilled, less unionised and less costly rural labour.

### What are the challenges faced by rural manufacturing?

The **cost of capital** seems to be higher for firms operating on the rural side. This is evident from the shares in rent and interest paid. The rural segment accounted for only 35% of the total rent paid, while it had 60% of the total interest payments.

There exists an issue of **"skills shortage"** in rural areas as manufacturing now needs higher skilled workers to compete in the highly **technological global 'new economy'**. Manufacturers who depend only on low-wage workers simply cannot sustain their **competitive edge** for longer periods as this cost advantage vanishes over time.

### 13. [Our experiment with an e-rupee will yield demand-side learnings](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Our experiment with an e-rupee will yield demand-side learnings"** published in the **Livemint** on **14<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – Money market.

**Relevance:** About India's digital rupee.

**News:** Central banks across the world have begun experimenting with various forms of digital money. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also launched two variants of a digital rupee on an experimental basis. One for wholesale transactions between banks and another for retail transactions within the private sector.

About India's digital rupee

**Read here:** [RBI unveils features of digital rupee, plans to launch pilot soon](#)

How India's digital rupee is unique?

India decided to launch two different variants such as the wholesale variant and the retail variant.

**Wholesale variant:** It operates through the accounts that commercial banks have with the Indian central bank.

**Retail variant:** It is based on a two-tier system—individuals and firms can hold it only through the banking system.

Some unique features include **a) India's digital rupee is based on the idea of tokens, b) RBI will issue the digital rupee but banks will distribute it to the private sector** like fiat currency.

Why does India have two different variants?

**Does not try to alter the current monetary system:** At present only banks have accounts with RBI while the rest of the economy operates through the commercial banking system. India followed the same approach with the digital rupee also.



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**Digital rupee does not pay any interest to its holder:** Digital rupee is a substitute for cash rather than a substitute for bank deposits.

The **challenges** with interest-paying CBDC held directly with the RBI are **1)** It will create challenges for bank deposits. Thus, it will **create financial stability risks**, **2)** It will **complicate the conduct of monetary policy** as individuals move money between their accounts with commercial banks and the central bank, leading to fluctuations in the monetary base.

**Must read:** [Digital Rupee: Advantages and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the demand for the Indian rupee at present?



Source: Livemint

A recent research paper by economists at the International Monetary Fund shows that **a)** The use of cash as a mode of payment has actually grown in India between 2005 and 2020, **b)** The use of instant payment options such as NEFT and IMPS has increased, **c)** The use of cheques and demand drafts has dropped sharply.

Overall, the government wants to reduce the use of cash in the economy.

Will the digital rupee reduce the demand for cash in the economy?

CBDC is focused on money as a medium of exchange rather than a store of value. Hence, it has to compete with the UPI ecosystem which is already ubiquitous in most parts of the country to reduce the demand for cash in the economy.

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### 14. [Skewing the mustard field: The Yellow Revolution's revival needed](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**“Skewing the mustard field: The Yellow Revolution’s revival needed”** published in the **Business Standard** on **14<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**“A welcome shift”** published in the **Business Standard** on **14<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About the benefits and concerns associated with DMH-11.

**News:** Recently, the Ministry of Environment has allowed the commercial cultivation of genetically modified (GM) mustard.

About GM Mustard

**Must read:** [Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee approves commercial cultivation of genetically modified mustard yet again](#)

The DMH-11, developed by Delhi University’s biotechnology centre, reportedly gives about a 28% higher yield than the popular mustard variety Varuna.

What are the other gene-altered food crops allowed for field-testing by GEAC?

**Read here:** [Gene-altered food crops: Enhancing mustard yields](#)

What are the major benefits of GM Mustard?

**Reduce oil imports:** India is the fifth-largest producer and also the seventh-largest importer of edible oils in the world. GM Mustard will help in reducing these imports. Globally also, the rapeseed-mustard yields have gone up with the introduction of GM hybrids.

**Spun technology-driven green revolution:** The perceived positive government approach to GM crops can increase the introduction of genetically superior variants of food and commercial crops and might usher the technology-driven green revolution.

**Read more:** [GM crops – on approval to GM Mustard](#)

What are the concerns associated with the approval of GM Mustard?

**Low yield:** ICAR-All India Crop Research Project’s 2006-07 field trial data for GM mustard has shown that GM mustard had a much lower yield that year across locations.

**Health implications not studied properly:** The Supreme Court’s Technical Expert Committee highlighted the negative health implications and risks of Bt cotton and Bt brinjal on cows and rats, respectively.

Despite such impacts, **multi-generational trials** and many such tests were **not done** at all for GM mustard.

**No need for Genetic Modification:** Mustard does not exhibit high hybrid intensity for seed yields like maize, pearl millet, sorghum, sunflower and castor. Further, there is a natural, efficient, proven and safer way exist to prepare male sterile lines using cytoplasmic male sterility (CMS). This questions the need for Genetic modification for creating DMH-11.

**Increase herbicide usage:** Seed production of DMH 11 rests on the usage of a highly problematic herbicide glufosinate. This herbicide has not been approved for use in mustard crops. Further, the DMH-11 was never tested as a herbicide-tolerant crop.

**Against organic and natural farming:** Ministry of Agriculture is promoting organic and natural farming to reduce agrochemical usage. The Ministry has also recently issued directions to curb the usage of glyphosate.

On the contrary, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is incentivising glufosinate, which is even more problematic than glyphosate.

**Read more:** [GM Crops in India: Issues and challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

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How to increase India's mustard yields?

The yield potential of Indian mustard has been realised up to 4 tonne/ha at experimental fields. But many farmers are harvesting 3 tonne/ha to 3.5 tonne/ha in states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. This can be bridged by

**Harness genetic gains in oilseed mustard:** This can be realised by promoting high-quality seeds with good oil content from high-yielding released varieties/ non-GM hybrids and ensuring functional seed systems and input services.

For example, farmers in Rajasthan are growing Giriraj mustard. It was produced through natural hybridisation, which is giving 3-3.5 tonne/ha yield and also has high oil content (up to 42%).

**Promote effective agronomic practices:** a) India should **horizontally expand of the area of mustard cultivation** by using rice fallow, inter-cropping or diversifying crops, b) **Utilise technological options** like the right placement of seedlings through efficient fertiliser-cum-seed drill, proper plant geometry, conservation agriculture, mustard transplanting, etc.

**Revive the Yellow Revolution:** The "Yellow Revolution" to protect India from subsidised edible oil was unfortunately discontinued in the 1990s. It is time for India to revive that.

### 15. [Why are India's slowing exports a cause for concern?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Why are India's slowing exports a cause for concern?**" published in **The Hindu** on **15<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy

**Relevance:** India's economic growth

**News:** India's exports declined about 16.7% in October this year. Imports increased and the trade deficit widened by 50% while Vietnam and Philippines saw an increase in the export.

#### **What are the reasons behind the decline in exports?**

Sectors such as engineering goods, steel and allied sectors saw a decline in exports.

The reasons are – a) high inflation in the developed region, b) falling demand in the China, US and the EU, c) Russia-Ukraine war, d) export duty levied on steel and allied products to help increase local availability and check the prices, e) leave taken by workers on festivals that impacted the output.

However, despite these reasons, the Indian economy is expected to grow.

#### **What are the positive factors for the Indian economy to grow?**

According to the Finance Ministry, **domestic demands** are enough to increase the growth of the economy. It also expects that a **re-invigorated investment cycle** will lead to growth and job creation.

The Ministry further said that inflation was due to **local factors** such as higher food prices rather than imports-based reasons.

Therefore, it expects that inflation will become lower with the easing international commodity prices and the arrival of the Kharif crop.

As per the Ministry, **consumer inflation** has lowered in the month of November and the same month saw the lowest enrollment in MGNREGS.

Further, **private sector capital expenditure** will touch six lakh crore this fiscal which would make it the highest of the past six years. **Private capex** depends on credit or loans from the banking system and this has improved in the past months.

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Although **forex reserves** have seen decline in recent months, the situation is better than 2013 when foreign investors began pulling out of India's financial markets.

Therefore, these reasons prove that even though the exports have seen a decline but Indian economy is on the right track of growth.

### 16. [Energy conundrum – Solar power is important for India, but it will not serve every energy need](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Energy conundrum – Solar power is important for India, but it will not serve every energy need**” published in **The Hindu** on **15<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment

**Relevance:** concerns associated with setting up solar powers

**News:** India has committed to source nearly half its energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 and source at least 60% of its renewable energy from solar power. However, there are problems associated with generating solar based energy.

**What were the plans of the government regarding solar powers and what are problems associated with it?**

The government decided to set up large solar parks as small parks lead to higher per-unit production costs.

The government announced the ‘**Solar Parks and Ultra-Mega Solar Power Projects**’ policy for the creation of large parks in 2014 with an initial plan to set up 25 parks capable of generating at least 20,000 MW by 2019.

The government later increased it to 61 parks with a target of 40,000 MW in 2017.

However, **only a fourth** of the capacity has been achieved by now which means projects worth 10,000 MW have been commissioned. Four projects have also been cancelled by the Centre due to slow progress.

Further, India had committed to generate 1,00,000 MW from solar power by the end of 2022. However, only around 61,000 MW of such capacity has actually been installed.

There are various reasons behind the slow progress such as challenges in **acquiring land**, setting up necessary **infrastructure**, and **environmental issues**.

**What is the way ahead?**

These all show that India is lagging behind its commitment and it seems that Solar power may not be enough to cater the demand of the growing India.

Therefore, along with expanding the economy the government should also consider whether renewable power, solar, wind or nuclear will be enough for sustainable economic growth or not.

### 17. [Building climate resilience collectively](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article “**Building climate resilience collectively**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environment

**Relevance–** Fighting climate change

**News–** The article explains the issue of climate resilience for our cities.



### What is needed for improving the climate resilience of cities?

To facilitate implementation of the climate action plan and enable their integration with other missions, a **data-driven approach** may be useful.

There is a need to demonstrate urban planning strategies aimed at **climate resilience** through specific actions and interventions and link them to various finance streams accessible to the urban local bodies. It should be backed by sound data.

Cities need **effective and efficient planning instruments** that translate master plans into **transformative business-ready investment projects**.

### What is the Urban Sustainability Assessment Framework?

It is a decision support tool of **UN-Habitat** for municipal commissioners and urban practitioners. It supports the **sustainable and resilient urban planning and management** of Indian cities.

It enables cities to regularly capture **inter-sectoral data** and corresponding analysis on urban metrics. In this way, it helps in monitoring the performance of a city in static and dynamic contexts.

Cities can enhance **vertical integration** by pulling together the missions' objectives at the central level, State policies and projects, and local implementation.

### What shows the effectiveness of nature based solutions?

**Bhopal case**– In the case of Bhopal, transportation makes up for 19% of the city's GHG emissions. Bhopal favours non-motorised transport. But, it provides access to public bike docking stops to only 24% of its population. Only half of its streets have footpaths.

The city has immense potential to reduce its carbon footprint designing shared streets for personal vehicles, public transport, NMT and pedestrians. They can be linked with future economic activity zones and underserved areas.

These streets can also be used for native plant species and groundwater recharge by integrating water-sensitive urban design features with a potential of reducing GHG emissions.

**Jaipur case**–Jaipur has only 1.42 sq.m per capita of open space against a benchmark of 12 sq.m per person. Residential areas were found to be at least 1.25°C cooler than neighbourhoods with less green pockets. In industrial pockets, the urban heat island impact was greater with temperatures higher by 1.1°C.

Simple yet effective solutions that can increase Jaipur's resilience include community recharge pits in neighbourhood parks, and increasing permeable spaces along mobility corridors.

### What are the components of nature based solutions for climate change adaptation?

The planning approach for building climate resilience needs **comprehensive stakeholder participation** towards building climate resilience.

**Active involvement** from various tiers of government, non-governmental, community-based organisations, and academic institutions is desirable at each step.

Movements on the city performance indicators communicate the impact of these interventions to the decision-makers and the community at large.

Cumulative benefits and efficient use of public resources from various central and State missions, and **on-ground convergence** are parts of this approach.

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This **evidence-based approach** aims at making cities sustainable, resilient and inclusive with no one and no place left behind.

### 18. [Understanding the fusion energy breakthrough announced by the U.S.](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

“Understanding the fusion energy breakthrough announced by the U.S.” published in **The Hindu** on **15<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

“Energy breakthrough” published in the **Business Standard** on **15<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

“A civilizational pivot? Don’t hold your breath” published in the **Livemint** on **15<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – Science and Technology developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

**Relevance:** About nuclear fusion.

**News:** Recently, United States government officials announced that the National Ignition Facility (NIF) had achieved a significant milestone in nuclear fusion research. It produced 153% as much energy as went into triggering it.

About the nuclear fusion research

**Must read:** [US scientists take quantum leap on the road to create nuclear fusion energy for generating power](#)

**Ways to achieve nuclear fusion:** There are three ways to trigger nuclear fusion.

**1) Setting off a fission explosion:** The explosion momentarily creates conditions that trigger a fusion explosion. For instance, the hydrogen bomb. This process is not used to create commercial power.

**2) Inertial confinement:** It puts fusion material in a chamber made of a material that absorbs energy. The chamber is bombarded with high-energy lasers and it absorbs energy until destroyed in a fusion reaction. For example, the NIF.

**3) Magnetic confinement:** It involves trapping hydrogen plasma (electrically charged gas) within a magnetic field to safely apply heat and pressure. It is considered to be more technologically mature than inertial confinement. For example, International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).

**Condition for chain fusion reaction:** For a fusion chain reaction, the energy released by the initial reaction needs to set the stage for more reactions.

**Significance of fusion energy:** Nuclear fusion fuel is usually isotopes of hydrogen such as deuterium which is abundantly available, or relatively easily produced.

What are the challenges associated with the recent achievement?

–The NIF fusion facility is a **highly sophisticated system with tiny moving parts**. Even small changes in input conditions can lead to large variations in output. So, replicating the same in other places is challenging.

–For fusion to be truly gainful, the energy released by the reactions needs to be greater than the energy going into the lasers and not just the energy delivered to the hohlraum. This hasn’t yet been achieved.

**Note:** At the NIF lasers fire at a hohlraum not at the capsule directly.

–The road to a power plant from the NIF’s current achievement isn’t well-understood.

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What are the challenges associated with nuclear fusion?

-As stars mature, other elements are also produced via fusion. But simulating stellar conditions on Earth is hard.

-Complex, expensive machinery using massive power is needed to safely create conditions of intense pressure and temperatures of above 35 million degrees Celsius.

-Creating the above two situations and controlling fusion to produce stable power is even more difficult.

What is the significance of the recent achievement in nuclear fusion?

**a)** The research infused a hope that nuclear fusion could be commercially viable, although it is still at least 15 to 20 years in the future, **b)** It should lead to more investments, including private sector investments, in fusion research and development, especially at ITER.

American achievement has been described as a 'civilizational pivot' by some scientists. However, Indian scientists must clean up India's energy mix cheaply and safely by expanding wind, solar and other sources.

### 19. [The cost of India's subsidy spike](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"The cost of India's subsidy spike"** published in the **Indian Express** on **15<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies.

**Relevance:** About the government's subsidy bill.

**News:** The government has received the Lok Sabha's approval to spend an additional Rs 2.14 lakh crore towards subsidies on the 3Fs — food, fertiliser and fuel — in the current fiscal.

The recent increase will take the total expenditure in 2022-23 to Rs. 5.32 lakh crore. This would be the second-highest outgo on major subsidies after the Rs 7 lakh crore in 2020-21.

Why does the government's subsidy bill increase recently?

**External factors:** The last three years have been extraordinary in terms of external shocks. Such as the pandemic (2020-21 and 2021-22), climate calamities (2021-22) and the Russia-Ukraine war (2022-23) and each seamlessly transitioning to the other. This led to increase in the government's subsidy bill.

**Internal factors:** **a)** India saw millions die during the 1943 Bengal Famine or the great drought of 1899-1900. So, the government wants to ensure poor and vulnerable got access to free/near-free grain without any hurdles, **b)** The government by increasing subsidies has ensured no significant shortage of urea and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) for Indian farmers, despite the disruptions to the global fertiliser trade following the war.

**Read more:** [Accounting for subsidies: Let's build on the 'revdi' debate](#)

What are the challenges in the higher government's subsidy bill?

**a)** The market distortions created by increasing subsidies might be incurred excessively even in normal years, **b)** Unlike fossil fuels which are net taxed than subsidised, fertilizer and foods are not, **c)** The retail price of urea and DAP has been raised just once. This forced fertiliser companies to heavily under-price them, and **d)** The issue prices of wheat and rice through the regular public distribution system were frozen at Rs 2-3/kg since July 2013.

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

High subsidy bills entail costs, create market distortion. Hence, the government needs to revise these policies and introduce direct benefit transfers to reduce the government's subsidy bill.

20. [New data protection bill: A step closer to protecting privacy rights](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**New data protection bill: A step closer to protecting privacy rights**” published in **The Indian Express** on **16th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT

**Relevance**– Issues related to digital space

**News**– The article explains the provisions of the **Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022**.

**What are some provisions of the Bill?**

Bill has two major stakeholders — the **Data Principal and Data Fiduciary**. Data Principal refers to the subject whose data is being processed. Data Fiduciary is an entity that processes this data.

In different spheres of the law, when one party owes a “**fiduciary**” **duty** towards another; the relationship between the two is guided by **trust, assurance and good faith**. The Bill seems to be affirming that the Data Fiduciary is responsible for safeguarding the interests of **Data Principals**.

Bill describes the **obligations** of the Data Fiduciaries towards Data Principals, the **rights and duties** of the latter. It provides for a **regulatory framework** through which data will be processed.

**Which aspects of the Bill are noteworthy?**

**Safeguarding the data**– The Bill has outlined a category of Significant **Data Fiduciaries** that are required to comply with **additional measures** to safeguard the personal data of individuals. This in addition to the **general obligations** to prevent the misuse of the personal data of individuals.

This distinction is essential as only companies that process vast amounts of data or have a potential impact on the country’s sovereignty and integrity need to take such stringent measures.

**Data localisation**– Onerous provisions on “**data localisation**” in the previous versions of the Bill have been omitted. The reworked Bill permits the government to notify countries to which data transfers may be permitted. A **balance** has now been struck between the **legitimate concerns** of businesses and the **protection of personal data** of individuals.

**What are the provisions of the Bill that require further elaboration?**

**Section 25 and Schedule I**, that deal with **penalties**, require elaboration. Section 25 refers to the quantum of financial penalty that must be imposed on a person guilty of non-compliance in matters related to detail. The focus remains only on the **nature and gravity** of the violation.

The Bill must ensure that the penalties imposed are **proportionate** to the size and operations of a company. Fines must not drive companies into economic loss. The **European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation** levies penalties in accordance with the total turnover of companies.

**What are the positive aspects of the Bill?**

The Bill safeguards **individual data**. It also promotes **cooperation** between data fiduciaries and the government.

It draws upon the best practices of foreign jurisdictions, such as Europe and Australia. It has also been drafted in a manner that is **tailor-made** to India’s requirements.

Even the exemptions granted to the Centre are extremely **restrictive** and in sync with past **judicial precedents and Article 19(2)** of the Constitution.



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### 21. [We're a step closer to an overhaul of our competition law](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**We're a step closer to an overhaul of our competition law**” published in the **mint** on **16th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Indian economy

**Relevance**– Regulation of economy

**News**– The article explains the issues related to Competition(Amendment) Bill,2022. It also explains the standing committee report of this bill.

#### **What are key provisions of this bill?**

**Deal value threshold for CCI Filing**– One of the key proposals of the bill is introduction of a deal-value based threshold. Currently, a deal triggers CCI filing requirements when certain thresholds based on parties turnover are met.

The bill proposes a mandatory CCI filing requirement for all deals valued above 2000 crore rupees. Such a deal should have **substantial business operations** in India. This requirement for business presence is called the **local nexus requirement**.

However, there is no clarity on how the deal value would be calculated and what quantum of local nexus would trigger a filing.

**Settlement of cartel cases**– The Bill has excluded the cartels from the **settlement mechanism**. It is most pernicious violation of the competition law and settlement procedure for them would send a wrong signal.

#### **What are recommendations of the Standing Committee on Finance on this bill?**

**Local nexus requirement** should apply to target and not to acquirer. Calculation of deal value and nature of local nexus has been left to CCI.

It proposed to expand the scope of settlement mechanisms to cartels also. Admission of guilt may not be mandatory for settlement. It allowed the provision of compensation for consumers affected by cartels

Allowing a dominant company to impose **reasonable conditions** necessary to protect IPR.

Using the **rule-of reason approach** to assess the abuse of dominant position.

Limiting the scope of **hub and scope cartels** to exclude those who do not intend to actively participate in furtherance of a cartel, such as online platforms acting only as **intermediaries**.

Not raiding or recording the statement under oath made by external legal counsels or independent advocates, which would compromise the principle of **attorney-client privilege**.

### 22. [Lessons in budgeting: Changing Budget tack amid changing realities](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Lessons in budgeting: Changing Budget tack amid changing realities**” published in the **Business Standard** on **17th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

**Relevance**– Issues related to government budgeting

**News**– The article explains the trends of the budget approach by the current finance minister. It also explains the current economic scenario.

#### **What has been the trend of the budget approach by the current finance minister?**

There is a change in her approach to budgeting. It had a **somewhat adventurous** beginning in 2019. Now it is notable for **growing realism**.

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In 2019, **tax revenue** fell short by a sharp 18.4%, because of economic slowdown and unprecedented cut in corporate tax rates. This year reported a **fiscal deficit** of 4.6%. It was up significantly from the originally budgeted 3.4%.

The next year GDP shrank due to the full impact of Covid. **Corporation tax revenue** shrank by 17.8%, while collections from **GST** dropped by 8.3%. The finance minister decided to end the wholesale fudging of **fiscal-deficit numbers** that had been going on. Bringing **off-balance sheet borrowing** into the government's books doubled the deficit to a record 9.2%.

In her third Budget, Ms Sitharaman signalled that she had realised the folly of budgeting over-reach. She projected only **modest revenue numbers** for 2021-22. Actual collections overshot the original projections by 13.4%. The year ended with a **deficit** that was more or less the same as originally projected.

This year is headed for a repeat of that performance. **Tax revenue** is running well ahead of projections. But on the expenditure side the subsidy outlay increased once again because of the impacts of the **Ukraine war** and continuous free supply of foodgrains.

### What is the current assessment of economic condition and scope for budgeting?

The **corporation tax rates** now match international benchmarks. **Income tax rates** are at an optimal level. But the multiplicity of **capital gains tax** rates remains. This is the same for GST.

**Fiscal deficit** remains far too high. Bringing it down is a big challenge. Government needs to provide bigger Budgets for defence, education and health care.

India's Budgets are too small for the demands being made on its governments. So there is really no escape from cutting the **subsidies**. That should lower the deficit to below 6% of GDP.

The additional outlays needed would therefore need to be financed by **fresh revenue**, possibly by raising the average GST level simultaneously with a convergence of rates.

### 23. [Funding the energy transition: India's G20 presidency must follow lessons from COP27](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Funding the energy transition: India's G20 presidency must follow lessons from COP27**” published in **The Indian Express** on 17th December 2022.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Environment

**Relevance**– Issues related to climate change

**News**– The article explains the issue for funding needed to tackle climate change. It also explains the scope of private capital for climate financing

### What is the difference of approach among countries on climate actions?

There remains a rift between developing and developed countries. It is on account of **asymmetries** between the **contribution and the financial responsibility** assumed for climate change.

It is estimated that 92% of excess **historical emissions** are attributable to developed countries. Yet the economic impact of climate change is disproportionately borne by vulnerable developing countries. The 58 vulnerable countries account for 5% of **global emissions** while the costs incurred are significant.

### What are the issues related to climate financing?

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**UNEP** estimates that efforts on **climate adaptation** would require \$160-340 billion by 2030. But, current financial flows are inadequate. Developing countries are receiving only a third of what is required.

COP27 underscored the need to **accelerate finance**. In its draft decision, the UN highlighted that it will require a **transformation of the financial systems, structures and processes**. The recognition is not novel and is self-evident from estimated gaps in finance. The 2009 commitment of \$100 billion in transfers remains unmet.

There exist funding mechanisms like **Green Climate Fund** meant to support **adaptation and mitigation**. But, there is wide discontent with the pace and extent of access to such facilities. The **institutional architecture** of multilateral funds has been demonstrably slow to deliver. There is the visible reluctance to contribute among the big economies.

**What is the scope of private capital to finance climate actions?** As the **public finances** are not adequate to fight climate change, private capital will be needed. But for private capital flows, a **proper regulatory response** is needed by the countries.

Even as private capital shifts to the green sectors on account of regulatory action, its **accessibility** for countries will depend on financial expectations.

We are watching climate actions connected with **tax policy**. This is evident from the revival of the **Financial Transaction Tax in the EU**. A general overhaul of **tax architecture** is inevitable.

**What should be the course of action on climate change for India as it assumes the G20 presidency?**

Then there have been repeated questions as to why India chooses to use the term “**phase down**” and its slow response. The question of phasing down coal will be asked repeatedly. The learnings from **COP27** must inform the G-20 presidency.

It is also important to remain conscious that dramatic shifts in policy are pursued domestically and not all change is pursued by **consensus**.

There needs to be better guidance on the pathway to **net zero**.

The principle of **common but differentiated responsibility** should not be traded for the promise of finance.

### 24. [How to ensure that the internet remains accessible to all](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**How to ensure that the internet remains accessible to all**” published in **The Indian Express** on 17th December 2022.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT

**Relevance**– **Issue** related to accessibility of internet

**News**– The article explains the need to ensure a level playing field in the context of evolving technologies in digital space.

### **Why is there a need for regulating the emerging digital space?**

To enable **access** to the internet, various **gateways** have come up in the last few decades in the form of telecom service providers, personal computers and smartphones, operating systems.

However, when these gateways **enable and restrict access** to other gateways or networks, the openness of the internet is threatened. They then shift roles from being a **facilitator to a regulator**, from being a **gateway to a gatekeeper**. Hence, the need for a **code of conduct or regulation** arises to keep the **playing field level and accessible** to all.



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In case of India, example of the enforcement of this code on providers Indian government policy on **Net Neutrality**. It ensured that we took a democratic stance against Big Tech. Without this policy, we would have seen the internet being partitioned into walled gardens controlled by telcos and Big Tech companies.

### What are the issues related to accessibility of emerging digital space?

**Digital technologies** are evolving at a very fast rate. The code of conduct and regulations can't catch up with the new gateway providers that are emerging.

The two prominent operating systems, **Google and Apple**, enjoy a lion's share of the app store market. They brought in good practices to ensure **basic hygiene** for smartphone applications, maintained **quality benchmarks**, and safeguarded the interests of their users.

Various practices of these distribution platforms have come into question lately. These range from restrictions on payment gateways, **advertising choices**, **app policies** and various other aspects of an application or business that could be considered discriminatory in both principle and practice.

In March, a report placed before the **Competition Commission of India** found Google Play Store's payments policy "**unfair and discriminatory**". **Google Play Store and Apple's App Store**, are said to be charging up to 30% commission on payments processed.

Google and Apple have garnered **unilateral control** over the publishing of smartphone applications on their OS. Various smartphone application-dependent businesses and developers continue to remain vulnerable to such **internal business policy changes** on these platforms.

### What are the steps by various governments for regulating digital space?

The European Union has recently enacted the **Digital Markets Act**. Its regulations aim to keep digital markets **innovative and open to competition**, through **ex-ante regulation**. It will prohibit the implementation of the most harmful **anti-competitive practices** by the largest digital platforms.

The Indian government has taken steps to maintain its **sovereignty** through the path-breaking and disruptive **digital public goods** it has created. Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, and CoWIN are just a few examples.

### What is the way forward?

The need of the hour for the government to devise appropriate **regulations** to ensure a level playing field and not let the innovating **gateways turn into gatekeepers**.

### 25. Countering terror: All nations must come together against groups targeting civilians

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Countering terror: All nations must come together against groups targeting civilians**" published in **The Hindu** on **17<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

**Relevance:** About countering terror threats around the world.

**News:** Recently, India convened the UNSC special briefing on the 'Global Counterterrorism Approach'.

What are the key highlights of India's address on countering terror?

According to India's External Affairs Minister, **four hurdles to better counterterrorism cooperation need immediate attention**. These are **1)** state support for financing terror; **2)** multilateral mechanisms that are opaque and agenda-driven; **c)** double standards and



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politicisation of countering terrorism according to where terror groups belong, and **4)** the “next frontier” (the use of emerging technologies such as drones and virtual currency by terrorists).

India also mentioned that a P-5 country (**China**) continues to **block the designations of Pakistan-based terrorists** from the LeT and the JeM.

India stressed the global countries to unite and accept India’s 1996 proposal, the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terror**. This will institute global practices on countering terror. But the P-5 countries are polarised over Russia’s war in Ukraine.

**Note:** India also conducted a **No Money For Terror conference**, and an **Interpol conference** on countering terror. Pakistan condemned India as India described Pakistan as an “epicentre of terrorism”.

What was Pakistan’s response to India’s argument on countering terror?  
The Government should focus on the task at hand, that is **“re-invigorating” the global agenda and counter-terrorism architecture** by emphasising the need for unity on the issue.

India should **garner attention from all countries** to provide resources to the battle against terrorists, who continue to threaten civilian populations worldwide.

### 26. **Medical manna: Public health must offer incentives to recruit doctors**

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Medical manna: Public health must offer incentives to recruit doctors”** published in **The Times of India** on **17<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

**Relevance:** About increasing doctor count.

**News:** There is an increase in undergraduate medical seats from 53,000 in 2014 to 96,000 in 2022 and postgraduate seats from 31,000 seats to 63,000.

About the status of increasing doctor count

Between 2011 and 2021, government medical seats have increased faster, from 18,000 to 48,000 seats, while private seats went from 22,000 to 44,000.

India has 9 active doctors per 10,000 population. India trail China (22), US (26) and UK (30) in this regard. But at our current pace of adding nearly 1 lakh doctors a year, these deficits will be wiped out in 10-20 years.

Graduates from government colleges have bonds mandating rural service for 1-2 years. The increasing doctor count might address India’s problem of too few doctors in rural areas and backward states in future.

What are the concerns associated with increasing doctor count?

All southern states have over 10 UG seats per 10,000 population because they invested early in medical education. Similar numbers in UP and Bengal are 4, Bihar and Jharkhand 2.

As quantity is increasing, ensuring quality medical education will be tougher. So, India should address this interstate variation before it creates further challenges.

What does India need to do with an increased doctor count?

**a)** With thousands of new doctors, the **public health system must grow massively to absorb them** into its ranks, **b)** Government should **provide jobs at attractive salaries** that can address the issue of doctors preferring cities, and **c)** India should **promote migration of medical graduates from south to north**.