



# **9 PM Compilation**

**19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

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# General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 2

1. [India's crushing court backlogs, out-of-the box reform](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**India’s crushing court backlogs, out-of-the box reform**” published in **The Hindu** on **19th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Judiciary

**Relevance**– Reforms in judicial process

**News**– The article explains the steps needed to overcome the challenge of delays in justice delivery system

**What is the way forward to overcome delays in the justice delivery system?**

**Employ retired judges**– A large number of **experienced and fine judges** are retiring from the High Courts because they have reached the age of 62. All that needs to be done is to continue them with pay and perquisites.

There is a need to bring back retired Supreme Court judges to hear admission of **Special Leave Petitions**. These are appeals filed in hundreds every week against all kinds of orders of **lower courts and tribunals** across. They take away half the time of the country’s senior most judges in just reading these mountainous files .

Working hours and schedules can be **flexibly designed** for retired judges to operate. This will enable the current judges to take up important cases in adequate Bench strength and composition. There can be a scheme by which **experienced High Court senior advocates** sit as judges once a week to hear matters from another State High Court.

**Strengthen online justice**– There is a need to cultivate **online justice**. The courts responded COVID-19 shutdown by harnessing online facilities. Judges and lawyers were quite well-versed in this new medium and welcomed its **ease and flexibility**. Unfortunately, we have gone back to the old days of only physical hearings in crowded courtrooms.

Enabling **ad hoc judges** to work online from home with minimum support staff is an excellent harness of human and technology resources. It will enable a vast number of cases to be disposed of.

**Use of mediation**– There is a need to **employ mediation**. As a method of **dispute resolution**, it is far superior to **litigation**. It covers a wide range, from personal and matrimonial to civil and commercial and property disputes.

India has a good track record in this process. In less than 20 years it has firmly established itself in the **court annexed mediation schemes**. Most **mediation centres** have a success rate of over 50%. It costs much less, takes a fraction of the time litigation does, brings about **settlements** which all sides can agree to. It eliminates **appeals** and is easy to enforce.

There is a need to make it a **professionally attractive career option** for mediators. An **Indian Mediation Service** can be created on the lines of the judicial service. **Incentives and disincentives** must be devised for existing and prospective litigants to try this consensual method in good faith.

## 2. [Good governance beyond motherhood and apple pie](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Good governance beyond motherhood and apple pie**” published in **The Hindu** on **19th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Important aspects of governance

**Relevance**– Issues related to good governance

**News**– The article explains the steps taken by the current government at centre for good governance. It also explains the steps that are needed to be taken by state governments to promote good governance

**What are the steps taken by the current central government for good governance?**

The current government has repealed an estimated 2,000 **obsolete Acts, statutes and subordinate legislation** which include dozens of Appropriation acts, the Excise Act 1863, Foreign Recruiting Act 1874 etc.

There existed a contentious provision in the **Prevention of Corruption Act**. Any **pecuniary benefit** to any private parties, without public interest, regardless of whether there was an intent to cause such gains or not, was construed as **criminal misconduct** by a public servant. Therefore, even honest officers had to face this cruel law. This government finally scrapped this provision.

Another step of this government towards good governance is the **DigiLocker**. It is an integral part of the India stack. It now has more than five billion documents and 100 million users.

**What is the way forward for good governance?**

**Repeal of obsolete laws by state governments**– They should repeal **obsolete laws** that are often tools for rent seeking. Take the example of Karnataka. It is one of India's fastest growing States. However, Karnataka ranked 17th in the 2019 **Business Reforms Action Plan** national rankings.

Avantis RegTech has studied industries and compliance across Indian States and concludes that Karnataka features in the top five States in India in terms of compliance burden. Karnataka's employers confront a total of 1,175 State-specific jail clauses and ranks among the top five in the country.

**Digilocker by state government**– State governments can set up enterprise DigiLockers to store all documents that any small or large business is expected to possess. Karnataka has implemented KUTUMBA (family beneficiary database), FRUITS (Farmer Registration and Unified beneficiary Information System), all leading to more good governance.

**Common portal**– No State government or the Government of India has any **common portal**, through which businesses even get to know fully the extent of the compliance burden.

There is a need to create a **common portal** where all the compliances for a particular industry are listed.

**Responsible citizenry**– Good governance is also the responsibility of enlightened citizens who should give some thought to complex trade-offs like compliance of tax laws in national interest.

## 3. [Decriminalisation of offences under GST](#)

**Source**: The post is based on the article “**Decriminalisation of offences under GST**” published in **The Hindu** on **19th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS 2 – Governance

**News**: The 48<sup>th</sup> GST council that was held recently recommended decriminalising certain offences under Section 132 of the Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) Act, 2017.

**What is the current problem with GST?**



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There have been multiple instances of increasing **tax evasion** with numerous cases of taxpayers using multiple strategies to avoid indirect tax.

For this, the GST law establishes penalties and guidelines that taxpayers must follow to ensure smooth intrastate or interstate trade of goods, prevent corruption and ensure an effective tax collection system.

### **What are the penalties provided under the GST Law?**

The GST Law provides for two different types of penalties, i.e., **concurrent and simultaneous**. Sections 122 to 131 of the **CGST Act of 2017** contain provisions relating to penalties, while Sections 132 to 138 contains provisions relating to prosecution and compounding.

The department authorities have the authority to impose monetary fines and the seizure of goods as penalties for violating statutory provisions and the length of the prison sentence is determined by the amount of tax evaded, etc.

### **What are the offences under GST law which attract IPC and CrPC provisions?**

**Section 69** of the CGST Act provides the power to arrest a person by an order of a commissioner for any offence committed under Section 132.

**Section 67** of the CGST Act defines that only an officer not below the rank of joint commissioner can authorize in writing an inspection or search.

Further, the CGST Act provides that if a group of two persons or more agree to commit an illegal act like tax evasion, fraud etc. they are held liable under the act of criminal conspiracy.

### **Why did the Parliament include punishments in the GST law?**

This was debated in the Parliament whether arrests should be made for offenses or not and what is the rationale behind the arrest.

However, then Union Finance Minister Mr. Arun Jaitley cleared the point that arrests are only made for the offences involving a higher tax evasion and the Council is meant to follow a middle path. For example, there is no arrest for the fraud up to five crore rupees.

### **What has been the recent recommendation to decriminalize the GST offences?**

- **a)** raising the minimum threshold of tax amount from one crore to two crore for prosecution under GST except for the offence of issuing invoices without supply of goods or services or both, **b)** reducing the compounding amount from the present range of 50 to 150% of the tax amount to the range of 25 to 100%, and **c)** decriminalising certain offences specified under Section 132 of the CGST Act, 2017, such as preventing any officer from doing his duties, deliberate tempering of material evidence, etc.

### **What will be the impact of decriminalisation?**

The government has taken a good step towards decriminalising because GST is a law that is still under development and there are many provisions of the law that still require changes and proper enforcement.

In this scenario, criminalising every small offense would discourage investors and other businesses to carry forward their functions smoothly.

### **What are the other recommended measures to facilitate trade?**

**Refunding unregistered persons** – There was no procedure for claim of refund of tax borne by unregistered buyers where the contract/agreement for supply of services like construction of flat/house and long-term insurance policy is cancelled. Therefore, the Council recommended amendment in CGST Rules, 2017 to prescribe the procedure for filing application of refund by the unregistered buyers in such cases.

**Facilitating e-commerce for micro enterprises** – The GST Council in its 47th meeting had granted in-principle approval for allowing unregistered suppliers and composition taxpayers to

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make intra-state supply of goods through E-Commerce Operators (ECOs), subject to certain conditions. The same has been allowed in the current GST meeting.

### What is the way ahead?

The steps taken by GST to decriminalize certain offences is appreciable because it would encourage business activities and arrests would only be made in the rarest of rare cases.

#### 4. [Fumes of failure – Prohibition is damaging Bihar in multiple ways](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Fumes of failure – Prohibition is damaging Bihar in multiple ways**” published in the **Business Standard** on **19<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About prohibition movements in states.

**News:** The death of over 70 people in Bihar after consuming illicit liquor underlines the challenges associated with prohibition.

What are the challenges associated with prohibition?

**a)** There will be an emergence of an illicit liquor mafia that smuggles liquor across state and international borders.

**b)** Hooch-related deaths will increase as they **deploy toxic chemicals to make hooch**. This creates **law and order problems** in a state.

**c)** The **revenue loss from prohibition** is enormous. For example, **1)** In a recent letter to Bihar CM, the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) said the state lost about Rs 10,000 crore in revenues from prohibition annually. Given the development needs of a state like Bihar, additional revenue could have been useful, **2)** Prohibition policy in Haryana in 1996 cost the state revenues and jobs. To compensate for the revenue forgone from liquor sales, the Haryana government raised tariffs on state-provided services — from bus fares to power and petrol.

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

Why there is an increase in prohibition movements in states throughout India?

**1)** To gain the **support of women voters** as they bear the brunt of men’s alcoholic inclinations as **victims of domestic violence and wasted incomes**.

**2)** In India social-drinking norms are near non-existent and daily life is tough enough to encourage alcoholic oblivion among working men.

What should be done instead of prohibition movements?

The government should **move towards experimenting with alternative wage payment practices** and **gradually lifting prohibition** in the states where it is implemented.

**Manufacturing and mining units** in states like Bihar can hand over the weekly wages of men to the womenfolk like in the UK.

**Read more:** [The effectiveness of prohibition of Alcohol in India and some alternative policy measures](#)



5. [Maharashtra panel to track interfaith marriages threatens to limit personal freedoms, can be weaponised against minorities](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Maharashtra panel to track interfaith marriages threatens to limit personal freedoms, can be weaponised against minorities” published in the **Indian Express** on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

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

**Relevance:** About anti-conversion legislation.

**News:** The Maharashtra government has decided to limit the mandate of the recently constituted Intercaste/Interfaith Marriage-Family Coordination Committee (state level) to gathering information on interfaith marriages.

About the Maharashtra's Intercaste/Interfaith Marriage-Family Coordination Committee  
The renamed Interfaith Marriage-Family Coordination Committee was functioning under the state Women and Child Development Ministry. The committee will ostensibly track fraud committed in the name of “love jihad”. It will also provide support and rehabilitation when necessary.

**Note:** Already states such as Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have brought in anti-conversion legislation.

**Read more:** [What are the existing laws on religious conversions?](#)

What are the concerns associated with the anti-conversion legislation?

**a)** It shows State's disproportionately interest and demand for control over the lives of individual citizens, **b)** It is violative of one's rights of freedom and equality, **c)** It denies a woman's choice of partner as her own free will and acts as coercion, **d)** It limits the openness and possibility by casting communal aspersions on personal choice and **e)** Overall, these laws are designed to deter men and women from leading fuller, freer lives.

**Must read:** [What are the issues in anti-conversion law?](#)

India should uphold the cauldron of multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-cultural aspirations of citizens. So, India should ensure openness and uphold personal choices.

6. [Criminalising consensual relationships](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article “Criminalising consensual relationships” published in **The Hindu** on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Vulnerable sections of population

**Relevance–** Issues related to adolescent population

**News–** The article explains the issues of consensual relationship between adolescents in context of the POCSO Act.

According to an analysis by Enfold Proactive Health Trust, cases related to **consensual relationships** constituted 24.3% of the total cases registered and disposed under the **POCSO Act** between 2016 and 2020. The data is of cases by special courts in Assam, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

**What are issues related to criminalization of consensual relationships between adults under POCSO Act?**

Its unintended effect has been the **criminal prosecution** and the **deprivation of liberty** of young people in consensual relationships. The law is also used by parents of adolescent girls to safeguard **family honour**.

The **prosecution process** has an adverse impact on the adolescents' development, education, employment, self-esteem, social reputation, and family life.

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The law casts adolescent girls as **victims**, thus rendering them **voiceless**. Adolescent boys are by default treated as children in **conflict with the law** and can even be tried as adults.

Such blanket criminalisation of consensual sexual acts among adolescents is gross oversight of their **sexual development, bodily integrity and autonomy**. It violates their **right to life, privacy, and dignity**.

The **penal approach** also impedes adolescents' right to barrier-free access to **sexual and reproductive health** services and information recognised under the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram.

The **mandatory reporting obligation** under the POCSO Act deters girls from availing themselves of medical services and pushes them towards unsafe abortions.

The inclusion of **consensual and non-exploitative acts** involving adolescents diverts time and resources from the investigation and trial of actual cases of sexual violence and exploitation.

According to **Crime in India**, 2021, 92.6% of cases under the **POCSO Act** were pending disposal. Consensual cases among these are overburdening the **criminal justice system**. There are abnormally **high acquittal rates** of 93.8% in cases related to consensual relationships and the girl did not say anything incriminating against the accused in 81.5% of the cases.

**What are arguments in support of decriminalisation of consensual relationships between adolescents?**

In **Vijayalakshmi vs State Rep. (2021)**, the Madras High Court cited evidence that “**adolescent romance** is an important developmental marker for **adolescents' self-identity, functioning and capacity for intimacy**”.

The **United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child** recommended that states should avoid criminalizing adolescents of similar ages for factually **consensual and non-exploitative sexual activity**.

**What is the way forward?**

**Comprehensive sexuality education** is needed to bridge knowledge gaps, build positive skills and attitudes. It will enable adolescents to make **informed decisions** and navigate through interpersonal relationships.

An amendment needs to be considered to the **POCSO Act** and the **Indian Penal Code** to decriminalise consensual acts involving adolescents above 16 years. It should also ensure that those above 16 years and below 18 years are protected against non-consensual acts.

Till such time as the law is amended, government agencies may consider exercising the **discretion** available to them under existing provisions in the best interest of children.

### 7. [A role for India in a world wide web](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**A role for India in a world wide web**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Effects of policies of developed and developing countries on India interests

**Relevance**– India foreign policy in changing world order

**News**– The article explains the case of leadership role for India in new global power equations. It explains the available foreign policy choices for India in the changing world order.

Recently Foreign Minister gave a statement on India's role in global politics. He stated that India can play a “**stabilising**” and “**bridging**” role in the world and can contribute towards the **de-risking** of the global economy and **depolarise** the world.

**What is the conventional notion of world leadership?**

It relies on the **economic and hard-power assumptions**.

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It is **military strength**, **nuclear capacity** and level of economic development and **soft power** that decides any country's stature in international politics.

### **Should India look for a leadership role in the new world order?**

India has the world's fourth-strongest army.

In case of **nuclear capacity**, India's status having been made clear in 1998, and then formally recognised in the India-U.S. nuclear deal some years later.

it is already the world's **third largest economy** in PPP.

India is a **land of paradoxes**. So many speak about India as a great power of the 21st century when we are not yet able to feed, educate and employ all our people.

So it is not economic growth, military strength or population numbers that would underscore our nation's potential role in the world of the 21st century. Rather, it is a transformation of the **terms of global exchange** and the way countries adapt to the **new international, interlinked landscape** that will shape their future role and direction.

India should not look for the **role of "world leader"**. It should become an active participant in a world that is no longer defined by parameters such as **"superpowers" or "great powers"**.

### **What are the new dynamics of international politics?**

Old binaries of the **Cold War era** are no longer relevant. The distinction between domestic and international is less and less meaningful in today's world.

**Foreign policy** is no longer just foreign. There is a need to think of its **domestic implications**. The ultimate purpose of any country's foreign policy is to promote the **security and well-being** of its own citizens.

One **defining paradigm** for foreign policy is impossible for today's world. India cannot simply be **non-aligned** between two superpowers when one of them sits on our borders and nibbles at our territory.

It can not afford to sacrifice strategic autonomy in a quest for **self-protection**. We need to define a **new role** for ourselves that depends on our understanding of the way the world is.

There will be **multiple networks**, which will sometimes overlap with each other with common memberships, and sometimes be distinct. But they all serve our interests in different ways and for different purposes.

### **What is the unique position of India in global affairs?**

India belongs both to the **non-aligned movement** and **western democracies**. India is a leading light of grouping developing countries, the **G-77**. It is also part of **G-20 grouping**. India plays an influential role both in the United Nations, a universal organisation that has 193 member states, and in the SAARC that has only its seven neighbours.

India has the great ability to be in all these **great institutional networks, pursuing different objectives with different partners**. It has moved beyond **non-alignment to multi-alignment**.

### **What is the way forward for India foreign policy?**

Today, India can take its **sovereignty** for granted. Our **strategic autonomy** is a fact of life and no longer something that has to be fought for.

Our country is now in a position to exercise a **vision of responsibility** on the world stage. It can assume the new role of participating in the making of **global rules** and even playing a role in imposing them.



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### 8. [Guns and butter – Govt must review its military spending](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Guns and butter – Govt must review its military spending**” published in **Business Standard** on **20<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relation

**Relevance:** India and China border issue

**News:** The Tawang clash between the Indian Army and Chinese PLA has been a matter of debate. The clash also highlights the lacunae of the Indian military.

**What is the present condition of the Indian Army?**

The Indian military has been the subject of **under-investment**.

Budgets are mainly set aside for infrastructure and welfare spending whereas the defence budget is merely at **2.5 percent** of gross domestic product.

Even out of 2.5 percent, the vast amount is spent on personnel costs, especially on **pensions** and very little is spent on capital spending.

Therefore, the Indian armed forces have not been modernized up to the expectations.

This is why the government is also quiet on the current Tawang clash and it hopes that India-China relationship can be managed without any further confrontation.

**What is the way ahead?**

China prefers war whereas India has been trying to solve the issue diplomatically and with dialogues but this won't work for a longer period of time. India should also be ready to face the clash with China.

For this, the government will have to start **re-investing in security** and **prioritising modernisation** of the military in its Budget allocation.

Moreover, India has only **one-fifth** the per capita income of China. Therefore, the government needs a smart strategy and spending choices to deal with the current situation.

### 9. [Hooch tragedy in Bihar: Nitish Kumar needs to learn from his mistakes](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Hooch tragedy in Bihar: Nitish Kumar needs to learn from his mistakes**” published in the **Indian Express** on **20<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About prohibition movements in states.

**News:** The death of over 70 people in Bihar after consuming illicit liquor underlines the challenges associated with prohibition.

About prohibition in Bihar

In 2016, the Rules of the **Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act** sought to punish the families of “offenders”, including fines, confiscation of property and jail. In 2018, some of the law's more draconian provisions were amended.

However, from 2016, when prohibition was imposed in Bihar, to 2021, there have been over 200 hooch-related deaths in the state.

What are the challenges associated with prohibition?

**Read here:** [Fumes of failure – Prohibition is damaging Bihar in multiple ways](#)

States such as Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have tried the policy of prohibition and understood that prohibition is not the solution to alcoholism.

In each case, the policy has been withdrawn because **a)** it pushes consumption underground, **b)** places an undue burden on the law and order machinery, **c)** increases criminalisation, and depletes revenues.

So, the counterproductive measure should be revoked in Bihar to save people and the exchequer.

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

10. [Upholding the autonomy of the Election Commission](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Upholding the autonomy of the Election Commission**” published in **The Hindu** on **21st December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Appointment to various constitutional post

**Relevance**– Issues related to free and fair elections

**News**– The article explains the issue of appointment of Election Commissioners.

Recently, the Supreme Court of India heard a crucial case about the method by which the Election Commission of India is constituted, and Election Commissioners appointed. It has reserved its judgement.

**What is the classical understanding of modern democracy?**

According to the classical understanding of **modern democracy**, there are three wings of state: the **legislature, the executive, and the judiciary**.

The task of the Constitution is to **allocate powers** between these three wings, and to ensure that there is an adequate degree of **checks and balances** between them. Elections are believed to fall within the executive domain.

**What has changed in contemporary times for modern democracy?**

It is now commonly accepted that healthy constitutional democracies need what are known as **fourth branch institutions or “integrity institutions”**. The reason is that basic rights and guarantees cannot be effective without an **infrastructure of implementation**.

Take the example of the **right to information**. Without an infrastructure of implementation, the right to information will remain only a paper guarantee. We need an **information commission** that is adequately staffed and funded to oversee its **on-ground enforcement**.

These tasks involve elements of the **judicial function** as well as the **administrative function**. Therefore, it cannot only be performed by the judiciary but needs bodies such as commissions. These institutions need to be **functionally independent** from the political executive. This is because they are the vehicles for implementing rights against the executive.

**What are the practices followed by other countries?**

South African and Kenyan Constitutions have dedicated constitutional provisions for fourth branch institutions such as Human Rights Commissions, Election Commissions.

The appointments process for such bodies normally involves multiple stakeholders from different wings of the state.

**What is the case of India democracy?**

The Indian Constitution also provides for such similar **fourth branch institutions**. The examples include ECI, CAG, UPSC. The Constitution goes to some degree to protect the **independence** of fourth branch institutions. But the problem is that the **power of appointment** lies exclusively with the executive.

**Indian constitutional history** as well points to the problem. The **collegium system** for the appointment of judges arose as a response to **executive abuse and attempts** to control the judiciary.

In the landmark **Vineet Narain case**, the Supreme Court held that the appointment of the CBI Director would have to be ratified by a three-member body that included the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition, and the Chief Justice of India.

The appointment process is difficult to create simply by **judicial decree**. It is something that needs **political consensus, public deliberation**, and, perhaps, a **carefully crafted legislation**.



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Court must be careful to avoid band-aid solutions. One possible alternative is for the Court to put into place certain **interim guidelines**. It should leave a more **permanent, structural solution** up to the legislature.

It is for the Court to decide how best that might be achieved. But the guiding principles must be **functional and effective independence** from the executive, from the moment of appointment to the retirement.

### 11. [The new normal in the Indo-Pacific contestation](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The new normal in the Indo-Pacific contestation**” published in **The Hindu** on **21st December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- International relations

**Relevance**– Indo-pacific

**News**– The article explains the changes in the strategic scenario of the Indo-Pacific. It also explains the future of geopolitics in this region.

#### **What are the steps taken by China to increase its outreach in the Indo-Pacific region?**

The contest for South Asia and the Indian Ocean is not new. China has long tried to mark its influence in these regions and enhance its **strategic ambitions**. It is trying to limit **Indian influence** and sustain its **energy supply** and economic growth.

Beijing's outreach in South Asia increased manifold in the early 2000s with its economic boom. It began to further its **strategic ends** in the region through loans, financial incentives, and mega-infrastructure projects. This became more **institutionalised** with the launch of the **Belt and Road Initiative** in 2013.

These investments enabled Beijing to access the Indian Ocean, promote **political and security ties** in the region. It has harboured military vessels and submarines, and taken certain islands and ports on lease in the Indian ocean.

#### **What are the actions taken by India and other Quad members to counter Chinese influence?**

After Galwan, New Delhi has re-energised **diplomatic efforts** in its backyard. In the Maldives, New Delhi is reciprocating President Ibrahim Solih's '**India First**' policy with massive **economic assistance, grants**, and infrastructure projects. It is also cooperating on **maritime security**. In Nepal, Prime Minister Modi's government has attempted to improve Nepal's overall **bilateral relations** with India.

In Sri Lanka, India, this year alone, has provided **economic and humanitarian assistance** and investments worth \$4 billion.

India's leading efforts in South Asia and the Indian Ocean have also attracted other Quad members. They are offering genuine alternatives to the **BRI**.

They have also assisted Sri Lanka throughout the crisis. Japan is also finalising its talks with Sri Lanka on debt restructuring.

In the Maldives, Australia and the U.S. have committed to opening their embassies and new areas of cooperation. In 2020, the U.S. signed a **defence and security framework** with the Maldives. Nepal has also ratified the **U.S.'s Millennium Challenge Corporation**.

#### **How are these actions perceived by India and China?**

It is only with the **Galwan clashes** in 2020 that the Indian **strategic thinking** is deeming Beijing as a bigger threat than that of Islamabad.

The possibility of a **two-front war persists**. But Pakistan's strategic isolation, economic and political fallout, and border and terror challenges emanating from Afghanistan have minimised the likelihood of its aggression.

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The recent success of India and its partners is unlikely to deter China from **furthering its presence** in the region. Recently, the Chinese surveillance vessel Yuan Wang-5 re-entered the Indian Ocean.

Beijing also hosted its first-ever **China-Indian Ocean Region Forum**, to institutionalise its presence in the region and challenge new initiatives such as the **Quad and the Colombo Security Conclave**.

**What will be the strategic implication of these acts for the future of this region?**

Beijing will continue to leverage its **economic and political influence** in South Asia.

South Asian countries would also hesitate to completely move away from China as they want **balancing** with China and India. It will essentially make this competition a '**new normal**'.

Such a **balancing outcome** is very likely. Most South Asian countries are now facing **economic and political turmoil**. The **COVID-19 pandemic** and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have continued to haunt the region.

Nepal, the Maldives and Bhutan are struggling with depleting **forex reserves**. **Energy shortages, inflation**, and negative or slow economic growth are also disrupting day-to-day activities in these countries. Ongoing protests in Bangladesh are a mere indication of such upcoming challenges.

### 12. [India's G20 presidency: An agenda for healthcare](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article "**India's G20 presidency: An agenda for healthcare**" published in **The Indian Express** on **21st December 2022**.

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

**Relevance**– Global cooperation in field of new agenda for healthcare

**News**– The article explains the agenda of healthcare for the 21st century which should be adopted by G20 under the Indian presidency. It explains the concept **Universal Healthcare and PHC-with-UHC approach**.

**What are the initiatives by G20 for the healthcare system?**

It has been one of the priority areas for **G20 deliberations**. The first meeting of health ministers of G20 countries was organised in 2017 by the **German presidency**.

The G20 now has **health finance** in its financial stream and health systems development in the Sherpa stream. An annual G20 meeting of health ministers and a **joint health and finance task force** reflects the seriousness the subject has gained.

The **Berlin Declaration 2017** of the G20 health ministers provided a **composite approach** focusing on **pandemic preparedness, health system strengthening** and tackling **antimicrobial resistance**. The **Indonesian presidency** in 2022 made it the major focus.

**What is the concept of Universal Healthcare?**

The concept of UHC was born in the 2000s. It was meant to prevent catastrophic medical expenditures due to **secondary and tertiary level** hospital services by **universalising** health insurance coverage. It was also adopted in 2015 as the strategy for **SDG-3** on ensuring healthcare for all at all ages.

However, the limited impact of this narrow strategy was soon evident. Expenditures on **outdoor services** became catastrophic for poor households. It prevented access to necessary healthcare and medicines. Many **unnecessary medical interventions** were being undertaken.

**How has the PHC-with-UHC approach developed?**

In 2018, the **Astana Conference organised by WHO and UNICEF** put out a declaration stating that primary healthcare is essential for fulfilling the UHC objectives. In 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted the combined **UHC-PHC approach as a "political declaration"**.

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The World Bank published a report in 2021. The dominant **hospital-centred medical system** is becoming **unaffordable** even for the high-income countries. However, these global vision documents, while adding primary level care to UHC, are not addressing the nature of hospital systems themselves and their linkages.

### **What is the PHC-with-UHC approach?**

It means strengthening primary level care linked to non-medical preventive action through whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches. It extends the “PHC principles” to secondary and tertiary care services.

It must additionally include the more recent initiatives that can be clustered together under **five themes**–

**First**, making health **central to development** in all sectors. **One health** that links animal and human health should be adopted.

**Second**, is **health systems strengthening**. There is a need to design **PHC-with-UHC for diverse contexts**. It should be conceptualised as a **continuum of care** — from self-care in households to community services, to primary level services and to all hospital services.

**Third**, **appropriate technologies** should be adopted as a norm. It should be done by strengthening **health technology assessment, ethics of healthcare, equitable access to pharmaceutical products and vaccines, integrative health systems using plural knowledge systems rationally**.

**Fourth**, health and healthcare should be looked at from the perspective of the **marginalised**. **Gendered health care needs**, Health care of indigenous peoples globally, **occupational health, mental health and wellbeing, healthy ageing** should be promoted.

**Fifth**, **decolonisation and democratisation** of health knowledge is needed with interests and perspectives of low-middle-income countries.

### **What are pioneering initiatives by India that can contribute to the PHC-with-UHC discussion?**

Lessons from the **National Health Mission** for strengthening public health delivery.

The **HIV-control programme's** successful involvement of affected communities and a complex well-managed service structure.

**Pluralism** of health knowledge systems, each independently supported within the national health system.

**Health personnel** such as the ASHAs, mid-level health providers and wellness centres, **Traditional community healthcare providers** with voluntary quality certification;

Research designed for validation of traditional systems.

Pharmaceutical and vaccines production capacity.

Developments in **digital health and social insurance** schemes and people's hospital models by civil society.

### **What is the way forward for strengthening the global healthcare system?**

There is a requirement of the drafting of **PHC-with-UHC** with a broad **global consensus** and commitment to a more **sustainable and people-empowering** health system.

Pursuing such an agenda would involve much dialogue within countries, regions and globally. This process could be kick-started by working through the **G20 Indian presidency**. It should call for organising a global conference on rethinking healthcare systems that moves a **Declaration on Sustainable and Empowering Health Care** for the 21st Century.



13. [The profound ramifications of one amendment](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The profound ramifications of one amendment**” published in **The Hindu** on **21st December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Transparency and accountability. GS2- Fundamental rights

**Relevance**– Issues related to democratic governance

**News**– The article explains the issues related to draft Data Protection Bill and its impact on good governance and fundamental rights

**What are issues with the draft Data Protection Bill?**

**Independence of DPAI**– Under the draft law, the **Data Protection Authority of India (DPAI)** will have great independent authority in a regulative area. The selection committee for DPAI consists of the CJI or her nominee, the Cabinet Secretary, and one person with expertise and repute in the data technology field. The **unfettered power of the executive** over the DPAI only serves to defeat the autonomy of the institution.

DPAI will be entrusted with **monitoring and enforcing legal affairs and policy setting, research and awareness, inquiries, grievance handling, and adjudication**. It is expected to guard **fundamental rights**. So, it is important to have a certain degree of separation between the executive and the regulatory body.

In addition, the DPAI also performs **adjudicatory functions**. The appellate adjudicatory officers are to be appointed by the board members of the DPAI who are solely appointed by the executive members. Such appointments could undermine the **independence** of the authority.

**Exemptions from RTI and impact on freedom of speech**– A major concern is the provision in the Bill which seeks to deny providing any personal information on administration officials under **Section 8(1)(j) of the Right to Information Act**. It cites the protection of **individual privacy**. This poses a serious problem with the **right of privacy vs the right to freedom of speech**. It will impact the **freedom of speech** guaranteed under the constitution.

The Bill justifies the exemption from the RTI in the interest of the “**sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, maintenance of public order or preventing incitement to any cognizable offence relating to the preceding sub-clauses**”.

**Deterrent for providing information**– This Bill enhances the **penalty provisions** for entities which fail to protect individuals from data breaches. In the name of protecting individuals, the government threatens to impose a fine of up to ₹250 crore. This will prove a deterrent for filing any genuine complaints.

14. [Fluid boundaries – Inter-State disputes resolution lies in a political culture respectful of diversity](#)

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

“**Fluid boundaries – Inter-State disputes resolution lies in a political culture respectful of diversity**” published in **The Hindu** on **21st November 2022**.

“**The battle for Belagavi**” published in the **Indian Express** on **21st November 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS 2 – Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.

**Relevance**: About Inter-State disputes.

**News**: The dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra over areas that both States claim to be theirs has led to violence recently. Both the Maharashtra and Karnataka legislative assemblies are prepared to pass resolutions that frame a hardening of their respective stances. The centre asked the states to wait for the Supreme Court to adjudicate the matter.

What is the Karnataka-Maharashtra border dispute?

**Read here:** [Explained | What is the Karnataka-Maharashtra border dispute?](#)

In 1957, Maharashtra claimed 814 villages and the three urban settlements of Belagavi, Karwar and Nippani in Karnataka. Karnataka on the other hand claim areas in Kolhapur, Sholapur and Sangli districts in Maharashtra.

What are the challenges in resolving inter-State disputes?

a) Many boundary disputes originated along with the 1956 linguistic reorganisation of Indian States. Hence, it is not easily amenable to technical and legal solutions, b) Not only Belagavi, but many other border towns and villages also have multilingual populations. Hence, carving out a political area that neatly fits with various linguistic groups is impossible in India. Further, almost all States have linguistic minorities that are accorded special rights.

**Must read:** [Karnataka-Maharashtra Border Dispute – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to resolve inter-State disputes?

-India's fluid political and cultural boundaries crisscross the entire landscape of India. So, harmony can be achieved only by **embracing and promoting a political culture that is respectful of diversity** that cannot be neatly demarcated.

-States should understand that language has been central to the formation of social identities, it became a marker of state boundaries only after Independence. So, the **state boundaries were expected to be soft borders** that allowed bilingual or multilingual communities to flourish, as they did in the past.

India's multilingualism cross-fertilised the production of literature in Indian languages and ensured the seamless transfer of ideas across linguistic subcultures. It is time for our states to ensure and embrace multilingualism.

#### 15. [India's China problem: Tawang clash: Sixty years on, why doesn't India have a China-specific strategy?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Tawang clash: Sixty years on, why doesn't India have a China-specific strategy?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **21<sup>st</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About India's China problem.

**News:** This year marks the 60th anniversary of the 1962 India-China War. The recent clash between Indian troops and PLA soldiers in the vicinity of Tawang should serve as a harsh reminder of the close call that Arunachal Pradesh (then known as the North-Eastern Frontier Agency or NEFA) had in 1962.

About the 1962 China-India war

The Chinese PLA advanced along two axes 500 miles apart — Tawang and Walong. They overran NEFA in three weeks. Later, China declared a ceasefire and PLA troops withdrew 20 km behind the McMahon Line.

Due to faulty intelligence and military incompetence, the Indian army faced challenges.

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

Why India's China problem is worrying?

1) Despite India's advancement in military capabilities in the past 60 years, China has seen **phenomenal economic, technological and military growth** and competes with the USA for the global “pole-position”, 2) **China has imposed a huge economic burden on India's defence budget** by forcing the “counter-mobilisation” of 50,000-60,000 extra Indian troops, 3) India's **post-Covid financial situation and depressed GDP growth rates** will not permit any significant hike in defence expenditure, 4) India's **liabilities with the “pay and pension” system** makes modernisation and re-equipment of the armed forces not possible, 5) India's defence budget at present is 2.1% of the GDP. Schemes like Agnipath and bans on the import of military hardware



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do not save instant money and do not bring instant self-reliance, and **6) India not only lacks a China-specific strategy**, but also a **national security strategy (NSS)**.

### Note

**Cabinet Committee on Security** is a four-member committee chaired by the PM. This committee is meant to be the final arbiter on all matters of national security.

The high-powered **National Security Council**, the **Strategic Policy Group**, and the **National Security Advisory Board** were tasked with strategic analysis and evolution of policy options.

How India can solve India's China problem?

**a) Resumption of robust economic growth** is the only solution for India's "guns vs butter" dilemma. For this, India should work on effective savings by cutting down on wasteful/non-essential government expenditure, reducing vote-garnering subsidies, or disinvesting/monetising idle assets, **b) India must acquire absolute clarity about China's larger objectives** and work on **military to seek tactical advantage**, **c) India's diplomatic policy should shift from "reactive" to "proactive"** and start **working on reducing Sino-Indian trade deficit of \$70 billion**, **d) India should canvass international opinion via the UN, G20 and other international forums** to pressurise China to come to the negotiating table, and **e) The Sino-Indian Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement** is now 30 years old, so the government should rework on that agreement to control present aggression.

**Read more:** [India- China boundary conflict](#)

### 16. [India's edtech ecosystem: Let our learning curve be hybrid, holistic and hyper-personalized](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Let our learning curve be hybrid, holistic and hyper-personalized**" published in the **Livemint** on **21<sup>st</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About India's edtech ecosystem.

**News:** The edtech ecosystem has turned pandemic challenges into an opportunity and taken digital learning to the masses. It is time for them to move to next level.

What type of digital technologies can aid the growth of India's edtech ecosystem?

Digital India and other ambitious government programmes such as Swayam, Atal Labs and PM e-Vidya are bringing together world-class pedagogies and technologies to unlock the true potential of India and its students.

The following digital technologies can aid the growth of India's ed-tech ecosystem.

**Deeper integration of hybrid and 'phygital' formats:** Hybrid learning will probably emerge as a preferred learning tool for better engagement and flexibility across all levels of education. The 'phygital' model, combining digital learning with hands-on learning and instructor interventions will also improve in future.

**Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 'gamification':** AI has the ability to create impactful solutions for learning. AI can foster real-time collaborative learning experiences between different student communities, thereby overcoming the traditional constraints of space, time and geography. Simulated labs, experiential centres and 'gamified' content can become the preferred modes for students to explore academics.

**Read more:** [Edtech's teachable moment](#)

What are the advantages of India's edtech ecosystem?

**The emergence of entrepreneurial mindset training:** India is featuring among the top entrepreneurial economies in the world and is home to 250+ million school-going children.

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Edtech systems can focus on how education systems can foster creativity and entrepreneurial thought among children through academic and non-academic interventions.

**Increased inclusivity in the learning ecosystem:** The effort towards inclusive and accessible digital learning is enshrined in National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Edtech platforms can include the previously excluded student communities into mainstream learning.

**Educating the educators:** Teachers globally have experienced a steep upward curve where they have learnt how to integrate technology into their classrooms. As this trend continues, there will be a concerted effort to upskill teachers in the use of tech-enabled pedagogical techniques.

**Moving from STEM to STEAM:** There will be a sharper focus on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) programmes that help students develop competencies holistically. By being at the intersection of media, technology and education, edtech is well-positioned to lead this trend.

**Social and emotional learning in mainstream education:** Edtech can provide tools that help students and teachers remain connected to each other virtually. By leveraging tech-enabled collaboration tools, edtech can help educators design projects and coursework that can inculcate better social skills in their classrooms.

This will extend the efforts of creating a safe, healthy and functional social community within schools and institutions of learning.

Overall, India's edtech ecosystem is set to create a billion-plus lifelong self-learners in India.

### 17. How Not To Teach – Too many schools are still tolerating corporal punishment. This must end

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**How Not To Teach Too many schools are still tolerating corporal punishment. This must end**” published in **The Times of India** on **21<sup>st</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About corporal punishment.

**News:** Two different news reports in recent times highlights that corporal punishment (CP) is still prevalent in schools to ensure student discipline.

What is corporal punishment?

It is any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort. CP cannot help students educationally or psychologically instead it only damages them.

There are clear legal injunctions against the use of force, including through RTE 2009 and the Juvenile Justice Act 2015. But despite the legal ban, these punishments are continuing in schools.

How can India remove corporal punishment altogether?

**a)** Civil societies and school administrations needs to do more concerted work to remove the CP,  
**b)** As envisaged by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, schools need clear protocols to help teachers deal with various possible student behaviours through positive disciplining, even parental engagement, and **c)** Schools need systems for monitoring teachers' mental health.

18. [The need to make cancer drugs affordable](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The need to make cancer drugs affordable**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd December 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About the high cost of cancer treatment

**News:** The article explains the issue of the high cost of cancer treatment in India.

**What are some facts related to the high cost of cancer treatment in India?**

The **Rajya Sabha Standing Committee on Health** noted that “about 40% of cancer hospitalisation cases are financed mainly through borrowings, sale of assets and contributions from friends and relatives”.

This situation has arisen because even average **out of pocket spending** on cancer care is too high. Spending on cancer care in private facilities is about three times that of public facilities.

According to **WHO**, the costs associated with other medical care and interventions such as surgical interventions and supportive care would make overall care even more **unaffordable**.

In the treatment protocol for breast cancer, **CDK (cyclin-dependent kinase) inhibitors** constitute a **major therapeutic tool**. These three drugs belong to this therapeutic class. A month’s treatment using these drugs could range between ₹48,000 and ₹95,000.

**What are the impacts of the high cost of cancer treatment?**

The **high treatment cost** has seriously impacted **survival rates** in developing countries. In the case of **breast cancer**, the five-year survival rate in India is estimated to be 65%. In high-income countries, it is nearly 90%.

The **lack of access** to these critical medicines has pushed the life of patients and their families into deep **financial stress**. It has affected their right to live with dignity, a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

The Supreme Court in several judgments has interpreted the **right to health** as an extension of the **right to life under Article 21**. According to the **WHO Constitution**, “enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the **fundamental rights** of every human being”.

**What explains the high cost of cancer treatment?**

**Recover research and development cost:** According to pharmaceutical companies, they spend over \$3 billion bringing a new molecule to the market. They must recover these costs.

However, the WHO observed that spending on **research and development** may bear little or no relationship to how pharmaceutical companies set cancer medicine prices. Companies set prices with an eye to **maximise profits**.

**Intellectual property protection:** The pharma companies can exercise **monopoly control** over their products.

The scope and the power of these monopolies can become nearly absolute due to several factors. Ordinarily, patent rights over a medicine last until the expiry of its patent term.

In the case of pharmaceutical patents, the leading firms in the industry often obtain patents on **incremental innovations** involving older medicines. It is called **evergreening**.

**What is the way forward to overcome the high cost of cancer treatment?**

The most obvious option is to authorise Indian companies to domestically produce high-priced cancer medicines, by granting **compulsory licences** in keeping with **Sections 84 and 92 of the Patents Act**.

The Government can invoke provisions of **Section 100**. It **empowers the government** to authorise any entity to use a patented invention **without the authorisation** of the patent holder. According to the **Rajya Sabha’s Standing Committee on Health**, invoking the provisions of Section 100 seems to be the best way forward.



19. [Benchmarks for ECs' appointments](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Benchmarks for ECs' appointments**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Appointment to various constitutional post

**Relevance:** About the appointment of Election Commissioners

**News:** The article explains the issues of the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners.

**What is the true constitutional spirit that guides important offices like ECI?**

**Article 324** of the Constitution provides for the creation of the ECI. This brings to mind the larger issue of the working of the Constitution.

According to **B.R. Ambedkar** “However good a **Constitution** may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a **Constitution** may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot. The **working of a Constitution** does not depend wholly upon the **nature of the Constitution**.” According to **Rajendra Prasad** “Whatever the Constitution may or may not provide, the **welfare of the country** will depend upon the way in which the country is administered. The **Constitution**, like a machine, is a **lifeless thing**. It acquires life because of the men who control it. India needs today nothing more than a **set of honest men** who will have the interest of the country before them.

The above views reflect the true **constitutional spirit**. Constitutional makers are expected to follow this spirit while assigning duties for important **constitutional posts**.

**What are the weaknesses in the system of appointment of ECs?**

One major weakness in the system of appointments of the ECs proposed is that it perpetuates the **bureaucratisation of the ECI**. It is not even **mentioned in the Constitution** anywhere. Two visible manifestations of this are the elevation of ECs to Chief Election Commissioner and the tenures of ECs and CEC.

The elevation is a clear violation of the **principle of *primus inter pares* (first among equals)**. **Monopolisation** of the positions of ECs and CEC by administrative services should be taken into consideration.

**What is the way forward for the appointment of ECs?**

The government need to go outside the **existing frameworks** as marginal improvements are not enough and bold actions are needed.

An **existing committee of Parliament** or a **new committee** formed for this purpose should **a)** Propose the **qualifications and requirements** for persons to be appointed as ECs/CEC. These proposals and the selected candidates should be put to Parliament and should be approved by **two-thirds majority** of the members of Parliament present and voting, **b)** Entrusted with the task of **searching for and selecting** individuals proposed to be appointed as ECs/CEC, **c) invite nominations and applications** of individuals appropriate for or interested in being appointed as ECs/CEC, and **d)** Once Parliament approves the committee recommendations, they should be **sent to the President** for approving the appointments. Once appointed, such persons should stay in their positions for **six years or the age of 75 years**, whichever is earlier. Persons above the age of 69 years should not be appointed.

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### 20. [Covid: How to prepare this time – India & the world must know what variant is causing China's Covid wave](#)

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

**“Concerning sequence – India’s vaccination strategy should accommodate for SARS-CoV-2 changes”** published in **The Hindu** on **22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022**.

**“Covid’s China syndrome”** published in the **Business Standard** on **22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022**.

**“Covid: How to prepare this time – India & the world must know what variant is causing China’s Covid wave”** published in **The Times of India** on **22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About Covid surge in China.

**News:** The recent increase in covid cases reported out of China has triggered global alarm. India’s Health Ministry has instructed states to send positive samples to the [Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium \(INSACOG\)](#) to check for new, concerning strains.

About the recent Covid surge in China

Despite the reports of crowded mortuaries, hospital admissions are piling up and stocked-out pharmacies. But weekly death counts are officially in the single digits.

Some mathematical modelling projections calculate a million COVID-19 cases in the coming days in China. An American public health scientist predicts that 60% of China and 10% of the world’s population are likely to be infected in the next 90 days.

What are the lessons from the recent Covid surge in China?

**1) Long lockdowns cannot eliminate the virus** or prevent the development of new strains, **2) The only reasonable defence possible against severe disease is via vaccines.** In China, 90% of the population receives a single dose, and half, a second dose. So, the **waning immunity is a cause of concern.**

**Read more:** [What ails India’s coronavirus genome sequencing system](#)

Why the recent Covid surge in China is a cause for concern for India?

**a) This surge is likely to resonate globally with many more infections, even in India, b) The issue of under-vaccination:** Large parts of India’s population is yet to take either the second dose or the third precautionary (booster) dose. For example, less than 17% of young Indians (18-44 years), and less than a quarter of middle-aged Indians (45 -59 years) have taken the third dose.

**Read more:** [How should India handle the new virus variants?](#)

What should India do to prevent the next covid surge?

India should **1) Constantly gather global intelligence on the patterns of infectivity, immune evasion and virulence of currently circulating variants, 2) Check whether the administered vaccines are still efficacious or not, 3) Resume its free vaccination programme for booster doses, 4) Make basic precautions such as masking and social-distancing norms compulsory again, 5) Keep all systems on alert for a rapid, scaled up public health response when needed**

India’s strategy should be a **combination of vigilance through clinical and genomic surveillance and scenario-based planning.**



21. [Strengthening urban local bodies](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Strengthening urban local bodies**” published in the **Business Standard** on **22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2 – Devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

**Relevance:** About Strengthening urban local bodies.

**News:** An effective local government can not only promote healthy urban growth but also ensure ease of living for the population.

About India's urban local bodies

In India, local governments in cities are established in accordance with the **74th Amendment Act**.

-Their institutional framework comprises, **a) Urban Local Bodies (ULBs):** They administer cities or towns with a specified population. These local bodies are entrusted with functions related to welfare, public health and safety, infrastructural works and other activities related to city development, **b) Municipal corporations, municipalities, notified area committees, and town area committees** are some other types of urban local bodies.

-The Amendment gave **state legislatures the authority to enact levies that support local government budgets**. Accordingly, it is constitutionally required for state governments to establish means for ULBs to raise money.

-The Amendment Act gave municipalities constitutional standing and a strong mandate for democratic decentralisation through self-governing local bodies in urban areas.

**Read more:** [Learn from Morbi: Fix local govt](#)

What are the financial challenges faced by the urban local bodies?

**a) The transfer of duties** from the national and subnational governments to local governments has **not been accompanied by a transfer of financial authority**, **b) Municipal corporations in India rely heavily on subsidies from the Central and state governments** to cover their spending needs because they have few other sources of income, **c) Over-reliance on property taxes** has prevented local governments from fully utilising other revenue streams such as trade permits, entertainment taxes, mobile tower taxes, solid waste user fees, water fees, and value capture finance, **d) The proportion of municipal corporations' own sources of income decreased** from 89.1% of total earnings in 1960-1961 to roughly 65 per cent in 2012-2013, **e) Despite receiving constitutional recognition in 1992, municipal revenue in India as a whole remained almost constant** from 1946 to 1947.

**Impacts of the financial constraints:** **1) According to the Reserve Bank of India**, financially starved urban local bodies are **unable to create the resources** needed to offer their residents high-quality facilities and services, **2) India's access to basic urban infrastructure falls short** of what has been accomplished in the OECD and other BRICS countries.

**Read more:** [Issues with Local Governance in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

How to improve the financial condition of urban local bodies?

-According to the **third State Finance Commission Report** of Uttarakhand (2018-19), the ULBs in India must **increase their efficiency in collecting** parking fees, advertisement taxes, user fees, lease rentals, and property taxes.

- The state governments should **ease resource restrictions for the operation of ULBs** when developing capacity for sustainable urbanisation.

-A **development of a web-based e-governance system** can ensure the participation and effectiveness of local government's operations. For instance, web-based property tax payments. India should **modernise local governance systems and getting them to work closely with local communities** in accordance with a clear and effective administrative structure.

22. [What we don't understand about prohibition in Bihar: It's popular](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**What we don't understand about prohibition in Bihar: It's popular**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance

**Relevance:** alcohol ban in Bihar and issues with it

**News:** The article discusses the effect of banning alcohol in Bihar and measures to prevent hooch related deaths.

**How has been the condition of Bihar after banning alcohol?**

Alcohol in Bihar was banned in the year 2016. This improved the condition as men no longer stayed outside late nights to drink. Domestic violence reduced and women were happy, especially those from the low strata of the society.

However, in later years the scenario changed. Liquors were made available through illegal means and low-quality liquor started coming into the market.

This again worried the government and it started to raid and confiscate liquor. The demands for substitutes for alcohol increased and **drug addiction among youth** became a real problem.

**What has been the impact of alcohol ban on Bihar?**

**Violence:** Domestic violence in Bihar fell by 37 percent between 2016 and 2020.

**Revenue loss:** Bihar lost a significant amount of revenue from taxation of alcohol. The revenues from alcohol for 2014-15 was about **15 per cent of total tax revenues and 1 percent of the state's GDP**. However, it is not much of concern as 75 percent of Bihar's revenues are generated via **central taxes or grants from the Centre**.

**Less crowding jails:** Bihar's jails are not overflowing. This is because conviction rates under the prohibition law are very low.

Therefore, there has been a mixed response in banning alcohol. Moreover, no policy can claim success if it leads to **preventable calamities**, like people recently lost lives due to the consumption of hooch.

**What can be the course of action for Bihar?**

One of the ways is to make **alcohol available but levy high taxes on it**. This will ensure that alcohol is legal and demand is reduced for illegal liquor.

Further, a high tax would also lead to **low consumption, increase revenues, refocus police attention and bring down hooch-related deaths**. However, determining the optimal tax rates would be a concern.

23. [Why Beijing's rising maritime clout calls for a joint India-Japan nuclear submarine project](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Why Beijing's rising maritime clout calls for a joint India-Japan nuclear submarine project**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**Relevance-** Indo-Japan defence cooperation

**News-** The article explains the need for Indo-Japan cooperation on nuclear submarines.

**What led to the formation of AUKUS?**

It was most probably caused by a perception in Washington that Canberra was a more **reliably** against Beijing than New Delhi. The perception was probably caused by the Indian hesitancy to agree to even minimally **militarise the QUAD** from a purely **diplomatic grouping** to a more **military alignment**.

**What are the limitations of nuclear submarines operated by India?**

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There is a misperception that all nuclear submarines are similar. They are not. Only the US and the UK operate nuclear submarines with a fuel core of **95% enrichment**. It can give the propulsion unit enormous power over the **35-year lifespan** of the submarine.

Compared to this, other submarines have a core of **low-enriched uranium**. It gives them a limited life of fewer than 10 years at a moderate operating tempo. A US or British nuclear submarine has huge reserve power to operate for a long period of time and travel at long distances.

### **Why does India need Japan's cooperation on nuclear submarines?**

Repeated attempts by India to access US **nuclear submarine technology** have been refused on the grounds of US **naval opposition**.

Japan is the only Asian power that has the capacity to build a **naval propulsion reactor**. In fact, Mitsubishi and Hitachi are about to launch a new generation of nuclear power reactors to attain **carbon zero** by 2050.

The model for a **multinational defence project** like an Indo-Japan nuclear submarine would obviously be the **Euro fighter Tornado aircraft project**. The multinational consortium consists of the UK, Germany, Italy and Spain.

### **What can be the implications of Indo-Japan cooperation for building nuclear submarines?**

The Indian naval products and its limitations will determine **Indian naval strategy**. Today, the Chinese operate an overseas base in **Djibouti**. If India had reoriented its **military grand strategy** from **defensive territoriality to an offensive oceanic** one, the Chinese base in Djibouti would not exist for more than 72 hours.

An Indian nuclear submarine with an Indian low-enriched uranium core will force into a **cautious, timid and conservative maritime strategy**. It is because of the submarine's extremely limited operating profile.

An **Indo-Japanese nuclear submarine project** with both countries operating nuclear submarines in the South China sea would act as a **deterrence** to China.

### **What is the way forward?**

We need to put **Atma Nirbhar** aside and do an **Asian multilateral nuclear submarine project**. The Indian Navy's excellent **design organisation** can provide the drawings for the submarine. Mitsubishi or Hitachi can manufacture the **propulsion reactor**.

The whole project can be managed by an **inter-governmental group** probably led by the Controller of Warship Building in New Delhi.

## 24. [In U.S. actions, the worry of global trade lawlessness](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**In U.S. actions, the worry of global trade lawlessness**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

**Relevance**– International economic relations

**News**– The article explains the recent WTO ruling on tariff increase by the US on steel and aluminium. It also explains the changing international economic order.

Four separate WTO Panel reports have ruled that the tariffs of 25% and 10% on steel and aluminium, respectively imposed by the US during the presidency of Donald Trump. They are inconsistent with WTO law.

It held that these tariff rates breached the U.S.'s obligations under Article II.1 of the GATT. It obligates countries not to impose tariffs beyond bound rates.

### **What is justification by the US for tariff hikes and WTO response to these justifications?**



The U.S. tried to justify its tariff hikes under **Article XXI of GATT** which allows countries to deviate from their trade obligations on grounds of **national security**.

The panel held that it can review the action of a state taken purportedly to protect its national security.

The Panel rejected the U.S.'s argument that it increased the tariff rates due to **global excess capacity**, which could lead to excessive imports of these two commodities used in defence production. Thus, it can compromise the U.S.'s national security.

It held that the situation the U.S. referred to does not constitute an **emergency in international relations**.

### **How is the international economic order changing?**

The **International economic order** today is moving away from the **post-Cold War neoliberal order toward a new geoeconomic order**. In the neoliberal order, **economic and security interests** are relatively independent tracks.

Neoliberalism is based on principles such as **non-discrimination in international economic relations** and a **peaceful settlement of disputes** through neutral international courts.

These principles are achieved by **legalising the neoliberal order** through the creation of **global institutions** such as the WTO and a plethora of free trade and investment treaties. The US supported **free trade** because it did not fear the growth of its strategic rivals such as China.

Nowadays, **independent economic and security tracks** have started to converge. It heralds the **geoeconomic order**. As the difference between the size of the Chinese and American economies began to shrink at a rapid pace, the U.S. seems to be giving up on **free trade** and embracing **protectionism**.

The increasing use of national **security** to justify such **economic nationalism** is an attempt to blunt the possibility of international courts reviewing state action.

### **What will be the implications of the new economic order?**

The geoeconomic order will inevitably lead to **'international trade lawlessness'**. The Biden administration has rejected the WTO Panel's ruling calling it 'flawed'.

The U.S. is also asking for reforms in the WTO's **dispute settlement mechanism**. The fear of being called out for **economic nationalism** by the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism has led the U.S. to block the appointment of judges to the Appellate Body of WTO.

This will only embolden other countries to brazenly pursue **unilateralism and economic nationalism**. The days ahead will be trying times for the **post-war liberal trade order**.

### 25. [Reshaping the world's responses to the terror matrix](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **"Reshaping the world's responses to the terror matrix"** published in **The Hindu** on **23rd December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- International relations

**Relevance**– Issues related to global terrorism

**News**– The article explains the changing form of terrorism across the world. It explains the response of world leaders to this threat and the need to change the strategy for fighting against terrorism.

### **How has the concept of terrorism changed in recent times?**

It was as at the beginning of this century that the world witnessed **several landmark terror attacks**. Two that stood out were the September 11, 2001 terror attack in New York, and the **November 26, 2008 attack** in Mumbai.

Both in their own way reflected the kind of **paradigmatic changes** that were taking place in the practice of violence. The 9/11 attack heralded what came to be regarded as **'new age terrorism'**.

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Mumbai underscored the dangers of **state-sponsored terrorism**. The **cognitive map of terrorism** had changed with these attacks.

Some major terror attacks took place in 2015-16. The attacks on the **Charlie Hebdo offices in Paris, Bardo Museum attack in Tunis, Istanbul** attack. They signalled the rise of new terrorist entities such as the **Islamic State and al Qaeda**.

During 2016, the IS launched several more spectacular attacks across Asia, Europe and North Africa. The **intensity** has since declined to an extent. But, these are indications of new **complicated patterns of relationships** among various terrorist entities.

Terrorism remains the **omnipresent threat** that it has always been. Africa and northwest Asia appear to have become the main hunting ground of the al-Qaeda and IS terrorists.

**Linkages** among terrorist groups have strengthened. It was evident when **al-Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri** was identified as living in Kabul in a '**safe house**' maintained by the **Haqqani Network**.

Al-Qaeda's activities in particular are becoming more **decentralised**. It is finding fertile grounds in the **Sahel region of Africa and in Eastern Africa**, apart from its salience in Afghanistan. Taliban is among al-Qaeda's firmest allies today.

**How is the world responding to threats of terrorism?**

The world has been witnessing a lot of **meetings and conferences** on the issue of countering terrorism worldwide. The list includes meetings of the **United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, the No Money for Terror Conference, and an Interpol Conference**.

India and Pakistan have continued to **hurl invectives** at each other instead of finding ways to cooperate to deal with the terrorism menace.

**What can be the implications of this cold response?**

The declining level of serious terrorist incidents do not translate into a **decline in terrorism**. It is the small incidents that portray what could happen in the near future.

It would be unfortunate if **counter-terrorism experts** across India don't pay attention to many recent terror attacks, such as the one in Coimbatore and Mangalore attacks.

The incidents may appear relatively insignificant, but are symptomatic of **growing radicalisation**. These indicate that a sizable base is being built in the southern region, which could lead to the creation of organisations on the model of the **Indian Mujahideen**.

**What is the way forward to tackle the threat of terrorism?**

Most needed by world leaders is not to accept all **declarations of a decline** in levels of terrorism at face value. They should not treat **some terrorists as good and others as bad**.

There is a need to reactivate the proposal for the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism** that has been languishing in the offices of the UN and finalise the list of items needed to check terrorism globally. Once the CCIT is accepted by the UN, the **war on terror** would gain a new salience.

Counter-terrorism agencies the world over need to hone their **skills and capabilities** on how best to counter '**new age terrorism**'.

There is also a clear need for counter-terrorism agencies across the world to function in a more **coordinated manner**, exchanging both **intelligence and tactics**.

Agencies need to take stock of the **newer patterns of terror** such as '**enabled terrorism**' and '**remote control terrorism**'.

Counter-terrorism experts will again need to **enlarge their expertise** to accommodate **multi-domain operations**, and undertake **terror 'gaming'**.



26. [Ensuring accessibility for disabled persons: A more accessible house](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “A more accessible house” published in **The Indian Express** on **24th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

**Relevance:** Issues related to the disabled population.

**News:** The article explains the enforcement problems faced by the Accessible India campaign. It also suggests improvement in the existing policy framework for improving the accessibility of disabled persons.

In December 2015, the Government of India launched the **Accessible India Campaign** to make the built environment, ICT ecosystem and transport facilities more **disabled-friendly**.

**What are the issues with the Accessible India campaign?**

The **accessible India Campaign** lacks a **strong enforcement mechanism** to ensure that ambitious milestones are set and pursued to their meaningful conclusion.

**Section 45** of the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** states that all existing public buildings shall be made accessible within five years of the date of promulgation of such rules. The relevant **Rules by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** were notified in June 2017. But the deadline has been breached. Deadlines in the AIC have also been repeatedly breached.

**What is the way forward to ensure accessibility for disabled persons?**

There should be a requirement to make every new building **accessible** before it is granted an **Occupancy Certificate** and relevant provisions of the **Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India, 2021** must be integrated into **local bye-laws** and **state planning laws**.

Municipal authorities must have capability to **gauge compliance** with the norms to make the built environment accessible.

The list of **empanelled professionals** maintained by municipal authorities must also consist of **accessibility professionals**. This requirement must be codified in **model building bye-laws** and the **National Building Code**.

Parliament must set up an **accessibility committee** urgently. It must be tasked with delivering recommendations in a time-bound manner on making every aspect of the Parliamentary process more **disabled-friendly**.

Central and state level procurement laws and policies must incorporate **accessibility criteria** in public procurement. Tender documents must set out applicable **accessibility standards**.

The deficiencies in the **Sugamya Bharat app** should be rectified so as to enable a well-meaning intervention to realise its full potential.

The Department of Disability must take the lead in ensuring that **accessibility targets** are met.

27. [Major questions about minors](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Major questions about minors” published in **The Indian Express** on **24th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Laws and mechanisms for vulnerable sections of the population.

**Relevance:** Issue related to the adolescent population

**News:** The article explains the issue of criminalisation of consensual sexual activity between adolescents by misusing the provisions of POCSO Act.

What is the POCSO Act?

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

### What are the issues with the POCSO Act?

POCSO blends **exploitative sexual practice** and **general sexual expression** by an adolescent. This has become an instrument to silence or regulates a **non-exploitative consensual sexual relationship** involving a minor girl, which is voluntary.

It causes **the victimisation of the “consenting girl”**. POCSO, MTP and the Child Marriage Act create a **complex socio-legal web** that deprives the minor girl of the **rights to dignity, liberty, and sexual and reproductive health**, and undermines her privacy.

It leads to **poor sexual awareness** among young girls.

The law disregards the likelihood of a minor girl engaging in sexual activity voluntarily. It ignores **social reality**. According to the **NFHS-5**, for instance, 39% women had their first sexual experience before turning 18.

As per **NCRB data**, the number of juveniles apprehended under the **POCSO Act** in the country has seen a **staggering jump of 180%** between 2017- 2021. Criminalising underage sexuality burdens the already-overburdened courts.

### What has been the approach of higher courts in this matter?

The Madras, Delhi and Meghalaya High Courts have raised concerns over the **criminalisation of romantic relationships** between or with an adolescent under POCSO.

The Madras High Court in **Vijayalakshmi v State (2021)** made it imperative to draw a line demarcating the nature of acts that should not be made to fall within the scope of this stringent law.

In **Dharmendra Singh v State Govt of NCT (2020)**, the Delhi High Court has attempted to increase the chances of bail of an accused, in case there is tacit approval by the girl and the age difference between the victim and the offender are less.

Prima facie the judiciary seems to have a **sympathetic approach** in cases where the outcome of the love affair is marriage. However, courts are reluctant to grant bail in matters of a love affair with a minor girl gone bad.

**Read more:** [Why Parliament must reexamine POCSO](#)

### What is the way forward?

There is a need to evolve a **separate procedure** for children while dealing with POCSO cases. The relief accorded by a few high courts to adolescent youth is disproportionate to the harm and harassment caused for fault of falling in love with a girl.

### 28. [Fighting cancer – Along with vaccination, screening must be done to detect early signs of HPV](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Fighting cancer – Along with vaccination, screening must be done to detect early signs of HPV**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Social Justice

**Relevance:** Measures taken by India to prevent cervical cancer.

**News:** The Indian government has decided to roll out vaccination for girls aged between 9 and 14 years through schools to fight cervical cancer. A study in the Lancet also suggests the rising of cervical cancer among women.

### What is cervical cancer?

It is caused by infection with the human papillomavirus (**HPV**) and there are vaccines which protect against carcinogenic HPV. **It is a preventable and treatable cancer.**

[Click here to read more](#)

**What are the key findings of the Lancet report?**

**India accounts for the highest number of cervical cancer cases in Asia** followed by China. More than 58% of all cases of cervical cancer and deaths globally were estimated in Asia. India accounted for 21% of cases and 23% of deaths followed by China.

Due to these concerns, **WHO** has come up with several guidelines. It has specified that countries must reach and maintain an incidence rate of fewer than 4 new cases of cervical cancer per 1,00,000 women a year.

Therefore, it is necessary that 90% of girls be fully vaccinated with the HPV vaccine by the age of 15 to achieve this goal.

**What steps are being taken by India to prevent cervical cancer?**

The government has decided to introduce the HPV vaccine in the Universal Immunisation Programme (**UIP**).

UIP is one of the largest public health programmes targeting over 2 crore newborns and 2 crore pregnant women annually and offers **free vaccines for at least 12 diseases**.

India is also expected to roll out the indigenously developed [Cervavac vaccine](#) by mid-2023. The vaccination will be provided primarily through schools.

The government will reach those girls who do not go to school through **community outreach and mobile teams**.

This is an important step because studies show that there is a link between cervical cancer incidence and human development index values. The incidence of **cervical cancer decreases as HDI improves**.

Further, there is also a need for **screening programmes** to be conducted to detect early signs of the disease to allow time for treatment.

India has to eliminate cervical cancer like it has eliminated diseases such as polio, maternal and neonatal tetanus, etc.

[29. Alleviating the scourge of private healthcare](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Alleviating the scourge of private healthcare**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th December 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** Issues related to affordable and accessible healthcare

**News:** The article explains the dominant role of the private sector and its dispersed nature. It also explains other challenges that make healthcare unaffordable.

**What are the issues faced by the healthcare system in India?**

There is a dominant role in the **private health sector**. Its public health expenditure as a percentage of its GDP is 1.28%. The share of **general government expenditure** dedicated to health is 4.8% which remains akin to the poorest countries. **Private spending** still constitutes nearly 60% of overall expenditure on health.

The private sector in India is dispersed. There exist **inequities** between rural and urban areas and widespread **market failure**. The private sector is **differentiated** into a host of organisations of varying sizes and scopes.

Each of these organisations is serving its own customer base. These often provide care at apparently **inexpensive rates**. But it is of **dubious quality**. Such a situation provides few natural incentives for **consolidation**.

Healthcare provision in cities tells about the stark **market failure** in healthcare. The booming number of providers in cities has increased the cost of healthcare.

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Indian healthcare faces **regulatory challenges and unfulfilled economic promises**. For instance, many States have their own **Clinical Establishments Acts** that are stuck short of full implementation.

The high costs of medical education trigger cost recovery through **resource-intensive ways** of practice.

**What is the way forward to improve the healthcare system?**

**Affordable private healthcare:** There is a need for initiatives that seek to make private healthcare more **affordable** without affecting **care quality**. This is likely to encompass a wide range of **policy instruments** that alter the operating conditions of the private sector. Such policies have to be enshrined in our **national health policy**.

This should not be confused with driving public funds into **public-private partnerships**. Rather, India needs overarching policies that drive down private healthcare costs even for the self-paying consumer with little or no government subsidy.

**Innovations in healthcare:** There is a need to incentivise and propagate many **business process innovations (BPI)** that lie scattered across the healthcare landscape such as the cost-reducing innovations by Aravind Eye Clinic and Narayana Hrudayalaya.

The healthcare ecosystem does not naturally **incentivise** such innovations. **Regulatory and economic policy signals** can be facilitative.

**Task shifting in healthcare:** It is an **evidence-based instrument** to cut costs, especially in under-resourced settings. The National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Act, 2021 can be a boost in this direction. Widening the ambit of the practice of nurses and allied personnel should be a strong emphasis of health policy.

**Setting health boards:** There is a need to set up regional health boards that organise care equitably within regions, exploit **economies of scale**, and bring down **healthcare costs**. Such boards should have adequate representation from communities.

These boards should have enough power to **determine local policy** and **resource allocation**, impose caps on the maximum number of healthcare providers, and build working **networks of care**.

**Affordable medical education:** The high cost of medical education needs policy attention.

**Strong public healthcare:** The need for making private healthcare more affordable can not be denied. But, it can not substitute adequate public spending on health. Affordable private healthcare must only come to supplement strong public healthcare.



# General Studies Paper – 3

General Studies - 3

1. [Why the Draft Data Bill needs stronger provisions for localisation of non-personal data](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Why the Draft Data Bill needs stronger provisions for localisation of non-personal data**” published in **The Indian Express** on **19th December 2022**.

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

**Relevance**– Issues related to data in emerging digital space

**News**– The article explains the issues related to the fresh draft of the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022.

**What are the positive aspects of the draft bill?**

It is crisp, to the point and easy to read. It is the first attempt to define who can possess data and what their **legal obligations** are.

It doesn't get into issues such as **critical and non-crucial data**. There is a very simple definition of **personal and non-personal data**.

The new draft is neither a copy nor an adaptation of Anglo-Saxon laws, like the **EU's General Data Protection Regulations** or the **CLOUD Act**. It is designed for India's requirements.

**What are the issues with the bill?**

**Lack of clarity**– There is still no clarity on the role and structure of the data protection board. It is not clear if it will be a regulator or adjudicator or how it will function independently.

**Issues related to sovereignty**– People concerned about **data sovereignty** have long been advocating the housing of servers within India. The draft appears far too focused on individuals' privacy issues.

There can't be a handful of **global corporations** accumulating data through ethical and unethical means. In many cases, they can manipulate the minds of consumers.

India has resisted the attempt by developed countries at international fora to bring in the **seamless flow of data** to facilitate the competitiveness of their corporations.

The **UNCTAD Trade and Development Report (2018)** says, “it is important for the countries to control their data and be able to use or share their data and **regulate its flow**.”

**Issues related to data transfer**– **Chapter 4 of the draft Bill** deals with the **transfer of data** outside the country. It says that the Central Government may notify such countries or territories outside India to which a **Data Fiduciary** may transfer personal data, in accordance with such terms and conditions as may be specified. These words may make the job of **trade negotiators** difficult when free trade agreements with the US, EU and the UK are yet to be concluded.

**What are the updates that are required for the bill?**

The draft requires **fine-tuning**, including determining the **quantum of penalties**. The upper ceiling has been fixed at Rs 500 crore. There are global examples, where the penalties are determined as a percentage of their global revenues.

There is no knowledge of how Big corporations use the data accumulated by them and what products are made out of it. To curb these tendencies, there is an urgent need for **data nationalism and localisation**.

India needs to assert its **sovereign right over non-personal data** emerging out of Indian citizens and make it obligatory to share products with Indian players.

India must continue to stand its ground on **e-commerce** at various WTO ministerials in the context of transfer of data outside our country.

It would have been much better if the law didn't leave important matters, such as the **obligations of data fiduciaries** once the data moves to foreign shores open to interpretation.

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The draft talks about **consent, deemed consent**, and has provisions for **withdrawal of consent**. But, this is largely for **personal data**.

As of now, there is little clarity about how personal data can be converted into **non-personal data**. One just has to remove the **identification labels** to make information non-personal.

### 2. [Setting standards – New SEBI guidelines](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Setting standards**” published in the **Business Standard** on **19th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Mobilisation of resources

**Relevance**– Issues related to money and capital markets

**News**– The article explains the new guidelines by SEBI for performance benchmarking and investment approach for Portfolio Management Services segment.

**What are the new guidelines by SEBI for the PMS segment?**

**Additional protection**– The new guidelines would give investors a clearer picture of what strategy a PMS is targeting, and also a clearer idea of returns with detailed comparisons and timeliness.

The **investment approach (IA)** is the documented philosophy adopted by a given portfolio manager. Now this IA needs to provide more information by disclosure of an **additional broad layer of strategy**. This additional layer can be defined as “**hybrid**”, “**equity**”, “**debt**” and “**multi-asset**”.

Each IA can be tied to only one **specific strategy**, though a manager could adopt and declare several IAs. This tagging is based on the judgement of the manager concerned.

**Change of strategy**– The tagging of an IA to a strategy or a benchmark may be changed only after offering an option to subscribers to the IA, to exit without any exit load. The performance track record prior to the change would not be used by the portfolio manager for performance reporting after the tagging changes.

Any changes in strategy and benchmark would be recorded with the logic justifying the change, and this would be verified as part of the annual audit of the PMS.

**Setting of benchmarks and standards**– The **Association of Portfolio Managers in India (APMI)** could prescribe a maximum of three **benchmarks** to compare for each strategy. These benchmarks would then reflect the core philosophy of the strategy. Further, the board of the **portfolio managers** would hold responsibility for ensuring the appropriate selection of strategy and the benchmark for each IA.

The APMI must set **standardised valuation norms** for portfolio managers, similar to the corresponding benchmarks applicable to mutual funds. The valuation of **debt and money market securities** by portfolio managers would have to be in line with the valuation norms set by the APMI.

**Evaluation of securities**– The APMI would empanel valuation agencies for providing **security-level prices** to portfolio managers. The managers would have to mandatorily use services from **empanelled agents** for the valuation of debt and money-market securities in their portfolios.

**Obligation of portfolio managers**– The managers would also have to present the **time-weighted rate of return (TWRR)** of the IA alongside the return of the selected benchmark, and the returns of other PMS running under the same strategy. Such returns and comparisons must also be disclosed while advertising.

Further, portfolio managers would have to submit **monthly reports** to the APMI within seven working days of the end of each month. The APMI would then have to make available the monthly reports on its website.

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### What are the advantages of these new guidelines on PMS?

This would clearly lead to improved **transparency** in the PMS segment. These **multiple layers of additional disclosures** and the detailed **benchmarking of returns** would allow investors to gauge relative performances better.

This information would also allow investors to make more **informed choices** in the selection of a new scheme.

### 3. [Passport To Justice: Can AI Help Cut Pendency Dramatically?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Passport To Justice: Can AI Help Cut Pendency Dramatically?**” published in **The Times of India** on **19<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Science and Technology

**Relevance:** use of AI in solving pendency of cases

**News:** India has a large pendency of cases and it takes a lot of time to hear them and provide judgment. Therefore, artificial intelligence techniques can be used to provide on time judgment.

#### How can Artificial Intelligence be helpful in solving cases?

Argentina has created **Prometea software**. It has been developed by the University of Buenos Aires in partnership with the public prosecutor and the constitutional court. It has three primary components –

**First**, a talkable user-friendly interface with a natural language processor for audio or text inputs so that it can be used by a clerk as well as by a judge. It can also be helpful in creating reports and graphs, providing solutions, sending notifications, doing deep internet search, etc.

**Second**, expert automation to draft judgments and provide recommendations. It uses **No black box AI** to provide transparent and clear assumptions, thereby preventing its misuse.

**Third**, **machine learning** for improving accuracy and reducing time in the future and to adapt to new types of cases. This is important to ensure that the software evolves as new judges and case law arise.

#### What are the advantages of this software?

**a)** higher success rates, **b)** predict a judgment in 20 seconds with 96% accuracy, **c)** can create multiple versions of the judgment which the judge has to just sign, **d)** operates on the entire range of court process from filing cases, scheduling it and creation of the verdict.

#### How can this software be helpful for India?

India has currently digitised its passport system unlike before where people used to stand in queues and wait for long hours, today everything is done digitally.

Similarly, this software can also be helpful in digitising the Indian judiciary and help in resolving the problem of pendency of cases. Therefore, there is a need for the Indian judiciary to adopt software like Prometea in its working.

### 4. [A low-tariff regime can do India a world of good](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**A low-tariff regime can do India a world of good**” published in the **Livemint** on **19<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About challenges faced by the Indian economy.

**News:** The deputy managing director of the [International Monetary Fund](#) has said that a global need to diversify purchases had generated interest in India in other words “The world is looking at India as a destination for investment.”



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What are some major remarks of the IMF deputy manager on the Indian economy?

There is a **global demand weakness** as imminent and **tighter financial conditions** as a potential trouble. The **risks of supply over-reliance on China** gain salience globally.

-Indian exports are showing signs of slowing down and dearer dollar debt has drawn capital out of the country and hit the rupee.

-Smartphone factories are improving in India due to production-linked incentives for manufacturers. Further, private funds have also started coming into other industries. However, their **performance is too small for job generation** and **remains as a challenge in the trajectory of India's economic growth**.

-**Retrospective taxation, rejections of foreign dispute settlements** and a revenue-sharing clutter in telecom have **created a bad reputation**.

-**Land acquisition has not eased** and India's **labour market stands with great gender imbalance**.

What should India do to boost its economy at the global level?

As global-scale manufacturing today tends to span multiple borders hence **integration with supply chains** is crucial.

Indian policymakers are keen to establish India as a factory for the world. But it is still a steep ambition, and achieving it will need **well-rounded policy alignment**.

The government has **cut taxes for new ventures** and sought to **slash red-tape and eased tax remission** for exporters. A **lower-tariff regime** will also push local producers to generally get more competitive.

### 5. [Creators Of Our Destroyers – INS Mormugao, commissioned yesterday, shows both the progress & weakness in indigenous warship building](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Creators Of Our Destroyers – INS Mormugao, commissioned yesterday, shows both the progress & weakness in indigenous warship building**” published in **The Times of India** on **19<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

**Relevance:** About India's shipbuilding industry.

**News:** INS Mormugao, the Indian navy's latest destroyer of the Project 15B class, has been commissioned recently.

About the Project-15 (P15) family of ships

The Project-15 (P15) class started with INS Delhi. It is India's first home-built destroyer. It was commissioned in November 1997 and set a new benchmark.

Apart from **three ships** of the P15 class, there have been **three of the P15A** named the **Kolkata class. Visakhapatnam** was the lead ship of the P15B class followed by **Mormugao**.

These ships now complete most of their trials and even weapon firings before commissioning so that they are ready to go in harm's way sooner.

What are the weaknesses associated with India's shipbuilding industry?

**1)** INS Mormugao has taken the **shortest build time of about seven years** due to integrated shipbuilding, while the INS Delhi took over 10 years. But, a drop of build time from 10-plus years to about 6-7 years over a 35-year build period, is by itself not impressive.

**2)** There are some major commonalities between all three sub-classes of the P15, so efficiencies should have been better.

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What are the improvements in India's shipbuilding industry?

There have been **generational improvements in each sub-class**. Both in terms of combat capabilities, as well as indigenous content. **"Indianisation" percentages have improved in the "float and fight" components** when compared to the P15s.

For example, **a)** The steel for the hull and superstructure is now made in India; **b)** More of the electronic components for electronic warfare, communications and radars are now either Indian-origin or licence-built in larger numbers with knowledge accretion from Indian partner firms in the public and private sectors, **c)** Weapons and their launchers are collaborative like the accurate and lethal Brahmos, **d)** The main and secondary guns as well as anti-submarine ordnance which is now more "Indian" than any time earlier, **e)** There are other design improvements across evolutionary processes that benefit stability, damage control, sea-keeping and stealth through more automation and improved systems needing fewer operators.

WhCreators Of Our Destroyers – INS Mormugao, commissioned yesterday, shows both the progress & weakness in indigenous warship building. Improvement in India's shipbuilding industry?

In the **"move" area or propulsion**, Indian ships reflect big lacunae. For example, frigates and destroyers still **require imported gas turbines**. India does not have any indigenous options even under imported transfer of technology neither in aero nor in marine gas turbines. This has to be improved.

Given the turmoil in Russia and Ukraine, **ships that depend on hardware from these two countries** could face problems that need to be addressed with 'atmanirbharta'.

### 6. [The cost to the country just for savings in CTC](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **"The cost to the country just for savings in CTC"** published in **The Indian Express** on **20th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Indian economy and employment

**Relevance**– Issues related to informal economy

**News**– The article explains the issue of increasing casual and contractual employment in India.

**What is the status of the casual workforce in India?**

According to the **Periodic Labour Force Survey 2021**, India has about 100 million casual workers and 50 million salaried workers with no written job contract. This gives us an estimate of 150 million contract workers. It is about 30% of the total labour force in the country.

In the **Annual Survey of Industries**, the share of contract employment in total industrial employment increased from 24% in 2004 to 38% in 2017.

After 2001, the public sector also started outsourcing many vacancies, citing them as non-core activities. In the **Public Enterprises Survey 2021**, the share of contract workers in PSUs was 17.1% in 2011-12. It increased to 19% in 2015-16 and 37.2% in 2020-21.

**Why is contract employment considered better by the firms?**

The cost to the **company (CTC)** is lower for contract employment when compared to permanent employment. This is considered beneficial for the economy as reduced CTC has also attracted foreign investment.

Besides wages, there are **five typical human resource costs: hiring costs, induction costs, career progression costs, severance and superannuation costs**.

**Hiring costs** are higher for the public sector when compared to the private sector. Millions apply for a few hundred vacancies in the public sector. Conducting examinations on this scale becomes a nightmare for the state machinery. Hiring through manpower suppliers is **cost and time efficient**.

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As contract labour requires **minimal training**, it reduces CTC. Management prefers contract labour as they are not entitled to the **generous paid leave** enjoyed by a permanent employee. Saving comes from no commitment to promotion or **post-retirement benefits** to contractual workers.

The **flexibility of firing** contractual employees is considered to be positively impacting **labour productivity**.

**What are the negative impacts of casualisation of the workforce?**

A major saving in CTC comes from **wage suppression**. It hurts on account of **reduced consumption and saving**.

Corners cut in hiring and training lead to a **deterioration in service quality**. It results in **second-order losses**, and sometimes accidents. According to a recent study published in The **Lancet**, an annual increase in outsourced spending of 1% in the **National Health Service in England** is associated with a rise in treatable mortality of 0.38%.

Underpaid contractual workers cannot afford **adequate health care** for themselves and their family members. It leads to decline in overall **human capital**.

As nobody invests in the **upskilling** of contractual workers, the **labour productivity** of the economy is also adversely impacted. Contractual workers are not as interested in improving the **quality of the product and services**. It is affecting the export **competitiveness of the economy**.

**What are innovative ways used by companies to get around the legal provisions of labour acts?**

Some are designating employees as **business partners** in the case of online cab booking and food delivery companies. Others are **segmenting core activity** as tech business in the case of most of the service aggregators.

**What is the way forward to overcome the challenges related to casualisation of the workforce?**

**More research** is required to quantify the adverse impact of replacing permanent jobs. The well-being of contract workers and their family members should not be the price the country should pay for savings in CTC.

The argument that permanency of employment breeds **inefficiency** has its own merit and should be dealt with for its root causes.

The public sector should reform its **appraisal mechanism** so as to reward the **efficiency** of permanent workers.

The private sector should realise that outsourcing's cost to the country might be much more than the cost to the company in the long run.

### 7. [The era of free data is over — the law is coming for Big Tech](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The era of free data is over — the law is coming for Big Tech**” published in **The Indian Express** on 20th December 2022.

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

**Relevance**– Issues related to emerging digital space

**News**– The article explains the increasing relevance of data across the world and efforts to regulate it. It also explains the Indian scenario.

**Which are major developments across the world for regulation of data?**

The **American Data Privacy and Protection Act** promises to radically transform the US data privacy and protection landscape. Data will only be collected to achieve the allowed purposes. It will also ban the use of “**sensitive**” data like health information and geolocation.



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**GDPR** is another law for regulation data. **UNCTAD** reports that 80% of all countries in the world have data protection and privacy legislation or are putting one into effect.

### **Why are countries falling to control and manage data?**

It is only lately that data has been thought of as a **valuable resource** as well as a **potent weapon**. Historically, the greatest wealth has been created by harnessing and **exploiting natural resources**. It was land in ancient times. Timber was the next logical resource to be exploited. Then came oil. Now, **data is the new oil**. The future world powers will be created on the back of data.

### **How countries across the world are recognising the importance of data?**

China is **leveraging data and AI**. Vladimir Putin has famously remarked that “the nation that leads in AI and data will lead the world”.

The US is waging war by choking off chips and technologies that enable AI from their **geopolitical foes**.

Much like oil, data has been used as a weapon too – influencing elections, defrauding investors, faking news.

### **What is the scenario in the case of India?**

The Indian situation is particularly interesting. India and China are perhaps the only two large countries where digitisation and data have happened at “**population scale**”.

The big difference in India is that it has happened with large **government intervention**. The digital transformation of the West, and even China, are largely **private enterprise-led**.

The Indian digitisation story has been breath-taking in its **scope of scale**: Digital Public Infrastructure **Aadhaar, UPI and the upcoming National Health Stack and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)**, built on the **India stack** have begun to transform its society and economy.

The Indian government is treating these as **Digital Public Goods**. The **scale and richness** of consumption, generation of data is massive. There is an immense scope to **leverage** this.

The Indian approach to regulating data is **three-pronged**: The **Data Protection Bill**, the forthcoming **Telecom Bill** and a **Digital India Act** to replace IT Act.

### **What can be the possible outcomes of these developments?**

The era of “**free data**” is over. The Big Tech companies will have to tweak their **business models**. There will be a **patchwork of laws** across the globe. **Multinational companies** dealing with data will find it very cumbersome to work across all of them.

Three, some law is better than no law. There are hopes of more **consumer protection, transparency and privacy protection** than before. However, it will continue to be an **arms race**. Governments will follow a **piecemeal approach** with data entities. These entities will try to stamp out new ways to beat new regulations.

### 8. [A planet in crisis – Tangible outcomes from biological diversity convention are far away](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**A planet in crisis – Tangible outcomes from biological diversity convention are far away**” published in **The Hindu** on **20<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment

**Relevance:** Biodiversity conservation

**News:** The article discusses about the Convention on Biological Diversity (**CBD**) that took place in Montreal, Canada recently and the concerns over biodiversity.

**What are the concerns for biodiversity?**



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As per the **UN estimate**, 34,000 plant and 5,200 animal species including one in eight of the world's bird species face extinction.

About **30% of breeds** of main farm animal species are currently at high risk of extinction and about 45% of the earth's original forests do not exist.

### **What has been the stand of India in conserving biodiversity?**

India has decided to **reduce the use of pesticides** and **conserve 30% of land and sea**. These both are great steps towards conserving biodiversity.

India has also said that different nations have different responsibility towards biodiversity conservation and richer nations should take efforts and provide funds to conserve biodiversity.

### **What was the outcome of the current CBD and what can be the course of action?**

Countries have agreed to prepare **road maps by 2024** and the **rich countries** have committed \$30 billion an annum by 2030.

However, these commitments can become successful only when countries agree to **define achievable targets** to conserve biodiversity and there is a need to take urgent action by the countries across the globe to conserve the biodiversity.

## 9. [Nuclear fusion may offer India a clean-energy pathway](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Nuclear fusion may offer India a clean-energy pathway"** published in the **Livemint** on **20<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About nuclear fission.

**News:** Scientists in the United States have for the first time achieved a net gain in energy from a nuclear fusion reaction.

About the recent achievement and Nuclear fusion

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

About the history of nuclear fission and its development

This happens when heavy elements like uranium and plutonium split. The science and subsequent technology of nuclear fission began with the discovery of uranium in 1789 by **Martin Klaproth**.

**William Rontgen** discovered ionising radiation (x-rays) a century later and **Pierre and Marrie Curie** gave the name 'radioactivity' to the phenomenon of decay with energy release.

**Ernest Rutherford** demonstrated radioactivity and performed the first artificially induced nuclear reaction in 1917. Rutherford established the nuclear structure of the atom and radioactive decay as a nuclear process.

**Lise Meitner and Otto Frisch** first used the term 'fission' and experimentally calculated the energy released.

During World War II, the world developed fission bombs and then adapted fission for civilian nuclear technology. Since that time, much effort has gone into making nuclear reactors safe and reliable.

**Read more:** [Nuclear Fusion Technology: Evolution, Challenges and Future Potential – Explained, pointwise](#)

About the history of nuclear fusion

**Hydrogen** had been produced for many centuries, it was only identified as an element by **Henry Cavendish** in 1766. **Helium** was discovered a century later by **Jules Janssen and Norman Lockyer**.

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In 1920, **Arthur Eddington** suggested that hydrogen-helium fusion could be the source of stellar energy. Similarly, fusion was achieved in the operation of the first hydrogen bomb in 1952.

The recent experiment proved a sustained and controlled fusion with a positive energy yield. Apart from this, this year itself, **a) China's EAST reactor** established a record-breaking sustained reaction of 17 minutes, **b) UK scientists at the Joint European Torus (JET) laboratory** announced that they had generated a record breaking 59 megajoules of sustained fusion energy.

**Note:** *Einstein's mass-energy equivalence provides the theoretical framework for fusion as well as fission.*

What is the significance of nuclear fusion?

**Read more:** [Breakthrough in nuclear fusion, and why it is significant](#)

How India is joining the nuclear fusion race?

**a)** India joined the US, UK, EU, Japan and Russia in a consortium to establish International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), **b)** India's own attempt at an experimental fusion reactor continues with the SST-2 tokamak at the Institute of Plasma Research in Gujarat.

India should improve its nuclear fusion research as **a)** India is not endowed with the required resources either for hydrocarbon energy or nuclear fission-based energy. So, India's interest and investment in nuclear fusion are essential, **b)** India **declared to become net-zero in 2070**. Focussing on nuclear fusion will provide a practical and preferred complement to renewables.

### 10. [About the Competition Act 2002: Gatekeepers of digital markets](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Gatekeepers of digital markets**" published in the **Business Standard** on **20<sup>th</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About Competition Act 2002.

**News:** The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has recently issued a series of orders penalising entities for abusing their dominant positions in digital markets. These orders expect digital platforms to serve as gatekeepers to maintain market contestability.

What is the need for Competition Act 2002?

Digital platforms provide a gateway between consumers and producers and must not impose terms that restrict users' ability to compete and innovate. According to the CCI, any condition imposed on business users by the gatekeepers or platform operators should be fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory.

By abusing market power (dominance), digital platforms can make it difficult for others to do business. Hence, the Competition Act 2002 (Act) proscribes abuse of dominance and empowers the CCI to protect businesses from such abuse.

**Read more:** [Digital markets must be defined well for competition regulation](#)

What are the concerns associated with the Competition Act 2002?

The Act guides the demarcation of relevant markets, determines its dominance in the said market, and defines whether its conduct amounts to abuse or not. But such guidance may not be helpful in the case of digital markets/ platforms. This is because

**1)** Digital markets/ platforms **can restrict access to markets by denying or restricting access to sellers** in such platforms. Hence, the platform decides what to be consumed and what to be produced in an economy, **2)** The firm providing the platform may be competing with other firms and, therefore, having a **conflict of interests**. For example, a firm may be producing games, and listing games of the same genre, including the ones produced by it, on its platform.

**3)** A platform enjoys certain externalities that enable it to **wield huge market power**. For instance, the **platform has vast data collected from its users**, which it may use to strategise

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digital advertising, **4)** Digital platforms **create entry barriers to digital markets**. For instance, platforms usually create networks of users. They may attract new users by making it free to connect with existing users of the network. The larger the number of users in the network, the larger is the network externality.

**Note:** These concerns, to some extent, exist in brick-and-mortar space as well. But, they do not own the data hence, have trust.

**Read more:** [CCI \(Competition Commission of India\): Provisions, Working and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the recommended amendments to the Competition Act 2002?

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce recommended that **a)** The Act should prescribe norms for the identification of gatekeeper platforms for stricter oversight, **b)** The CCI should formulate a mandatory code of conduct that comprises a set of core principles, as well as a list of hardwired dos and don'ts for gatekeepers.

How can the Digital Markets Act of the EU help India to frame a better Competition Act of 2002?

The Digital Markets Act of the European Union adopts ex-ante regulations to make digital markets fairer and more contestable. For example, it **a)** Defines gatekeepers as entities that have significant market influence as well as the threshold of turnover or users, **b)** Places a set of negative and positive obligations on such entities, and **c)** Bars targeted advertising and the use of personal data gathered from one platform to offer services on another.

India's [Competition Amendment Bill](#) should include these provisions and ensure fair competition.

### 11. [The Biodiversity Commitment](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The Biodiversity Commitment**” published in **The Indian Express** on **21<sup>st</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment

**Relevance:** Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

**News:** The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has been concluded in the Montreal, Canada recently. The Montreal meeting was the 15th edition of this conference also known as COP15.

**What is CBD?**

It is a 1993 agreement that meet every two years to work on a global plan to halt biodiversity loss and restore natural ecosystems.

It is not just about conservation and restoration of ecosystems. It is also about sustainable use of natural resources, and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of these resources. It was formed in the Rio Earth Summit 1992.

**Read here:** [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#)

**What were the three major climate conventions that were formed in the Rio Earth Summit 1992?**

The three conventions were – a) The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**), b) The Convention on Biological Diversity (**CBD**) and c) the Convention to Combat Desertification (**CCD**).

All the three environmental conventions seek to address the issues that overlap among them and the success of any one helps the cause of the others too.

**For example,** climate change is one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss while changes in land and ocean use have an impact on climate change. Land degradation appears as a cause as well as effect in both climate change and biodiversity loss.

Therefore, the issues overlap, even though all the three hold their separate CoPs.



**What are the outcomes of the current Montreal meeting?**

**Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)** – It contains four goals and 23 targets that need to be achieved by 2030. It is being compared to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change that is guiding global climate action.

The four goals and 23 targets in the GBF is commonly referred to as the **30×30 target**. It means to protect at least 30 per cent of the world's lands, oceans and coastal areas by 2030.

**Restoring/Maintaining the natural ecosystem** – The overall goal is to ensure that all natural ecosystems are either maintained, enhanced or restored substantially with an overall increase in the area of natural ecosystems by 2050.

**Reduction in Extinction** – Another goal is to ensure a ten-fold reduction in extinction rate of species. A recent report said that about 1 million species face extinction if urgent action is not taken.

**Reducing food wastage** – A commitment has been made to reduce global food wastage by half, reduce the risk of pesticides and other chemicals by half, and cut at least US\$ 500 billion every year from subsidies that harm biodiversity.

*Note: The meeting in Montreal that concluded was the second part of COP15, the first part was held in Kunming in China last year. Kunming was supposed to hold the entire COP15 but due to Covid-19 restrictions, it could only organise a hybrid event in October last year.*

**What were the previous agreements of the CBD and what are the challenges?**

**There were two supplementary agreements** – a) the Cartagena Protocol of 2003 and b) the Nagoya Protocol of 2014.

**Cartagena Protocol** – The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety seeks to protect biodiversity from genetically modified organisms by ensuring their safe handling, transport and use. **For example**, the interaction of GM crops with nature are not yet fully understood which is why they are cultivated on a separate farm.

**Nagoya Protocol** – the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing deals with the commercial utilisation of biological and genetic resources.

It asks the host countries to provide access to its genetic resources in a legal, fair and non-arbitrary manner and offers them a fair and equitable share of benefits arising out of the utilisation of those resources.

Moreover, countries in 2010, at COP10 in Nagoya, Japan had agreed to a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity containing 20 targets also known as the **Aichi targets**.

However, a recent report showed that none of these targets were achieved at the end of the decade (2010-20). Therefore, implementing the GBF and the current targets will remain a challenge.

12. [Why the proposal to raise import duties on non-essential items must be abandoned](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Why the proposal to raise import duties on non-essential items must be abandoned**” published in **The Indian Express** on **21<sup>st</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy

**Relevance:** higher import duty and problems associated with it

**News:** The government is planning to raise import duties on all non-essential items. The recent trend also shows that there has been an increase in the import duties which is not good for the nation.

**What has been the recent trends on the import duty?**

India's customs duty on non-agricultural products had come down from 150 per cent to 10 per cent between 1991-92 and 2007-08.



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However, this trend has been reversed and the country's average applied import tariff which stood at 13.5 per cent in 2014 rose to 18.3 per cent in 2021.

The last 4-5 years have also seen an **increase in the import duty** in a range of products such as solar modules and cells, mobile phone parts, etc.

Further, the government is again planning to increase the import duty which is not good.

**Why is the recent plan to increase import duty on non-essential items is not a good idea?**

**The government is trying to increase duty on those products which are fully grown in the market such as** Giorgio Armani perfumes, Johnnie Walker single malts, etc. The decision shows the **protectionist nature** of the government.

It also takes India back in the **pre reform era** and **Nehruvian era** where import duties were imposed to protect the domestic industries. However, things have changed now.

The problem with this is that it favours one industry over the other and what may be output for one is input for another. Thus, it affects the overall growth of the nations.

Further, the focus of the businesses also shifts to those products that are giving higher returns and has a greater market. Thus, impacting a balanced growth and the consumers and user industries being the losers.

**What is the way ahead?**

India is heading towards **Atmanirbhar Bharat**. It means India should produce not just for itself but also for the world and earn foreign exchange to be able to import things it cannot produce competitively.

Therefore, atmanirbharta should never act as a door for protectionism and government should rethink its plan on raising import duty.

### 13. [India's cyber threats: Defending against cyber threats](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Defending against cyber threats**" published in the **Business Standard** on **21<sup>st</sup> November 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Basics of cyber security.

**Relevance:** About India's cyber threats.

**News:** The recent cyberattack at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences is a stark reminder that no entity is safe from cyber threats.

About India's cyber threats

-Based on the data from the **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)**, 1.2 million cybersecurity incidents were reported in 2020, 1.4 million in 2021, and 0.67 million up to June in 2022.

-Google in contrast stated that India witnessed 18 million cyberattacks and 200,000 threats a day in the first quarter of 2022 alone.

-The World Economic Forum, in its 2022 Global Risk Report, identified cyber threats as among the top five global risks.

How EU is tackling cyber threats?

**EU's General Data Protection Regulations(GDPR):** The EU expects companies to maintain the integrity of critical infrastructure, systems, and services, and is steadily upping the requirements through its Network and Information Security directives. Further, the EU has put in place guidelines regarding the reporting of data breaches.

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

What are the various recommendations to tackle India's cyber threats?

**Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC):** a) It proposed amendments to its Cybersecurity Rules and put out two papers for discussion, b) Highlighting Cybersecurity Governance, the SEC

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expects companies to disclose the extent of the board's oversight of cybersecurity risks, and the management's role in assessing and managing cybersecurity-related risks, and in implementing the company's cybersecurity policies, procedures, and strategies.

**The Kotak committee:** The committee **put the onus of dealing with cybersecurity on the risk management committee** of the board.

**Must read:** [Held To Ransom – Healthcare sector is a sitting duck to cybercriminals. AIIMS & other hospitals must shore up security systems](#)

What needs to be done to reduce India's cyber threats?

**Follow proper cyber risk management:** This includes not only preventing breaches but also placing guidelines regarding the process to be followed once there is a cyberattack. This will help minimise financially and mitigate reputational damage when a breach occurs.

**There should be clarity regarding reporting data breaches:** The board members must have financial acumen, familiarity, and skills to understand cyber reporting and the ability to interact with third parties and internal resources to effectively oversee the organisation's cybersecurity architecture.

### [14. API crisis, again: PLI in key pharma ingredients was supposed to reduce dependence on China. But the job's only partly done](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"API crisis, again: PLI in key pharma ingredients was supposed to reduce dependence on China. But the job's only partly done"** published in **The Times of India** on **22nd December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Economy

**Relevance:** India dependency on imports for APIs

**News:** The article discusses the impact of dependency on China for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and measures adopted by India to counter it.

What is the recent issue?

The prices of key Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), which are the essential ingredients in making medicines, have increased recently by 12-25%

This is because China has stocked basic medicines leading to a shortage in the supply chain and increase in the price.

Why India imports APIs from China?

India has the capability to make many key APIs. However, it is the cheap cost provided by China that has made India dependent on imports and incapable of making key APIs.

APIs and key starting materials used in the production made up 63% of total pharma imports for 2018-19. This highlights the need for India to reduce its imports.

What has the performance of PLI scheme in pharma ingredients?

India introduced a PLI scheme in July 2020 to encourage domestic manufacture of a target group of 41 products, including aspirin and penicillin.

According to the recent data, 51 companies had received approval under the PLI scheme to begin new plants to make APIs. However, only about 25-30% of the companies have begun manufacturing.

Even though India has prioritised the PLI scheme through budgetary support, it has not seen the desired result.

What is the way ahead?

India has a good history in pharmaceutical manufacturing and has all the capabilities. Therefore, India needs to use its strength and execute its PLI scheme rapidly to reduce its dependence on China.

15. [With India crossing China's population next year, how we can create mass prosperity](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**With India crossing China's population next year, how we can create mass prosperity**” published in **The Indian Express** on **22nd December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian economy and employment

**Relevance:** Issues related to the growth and development of economy

**News:** The article explains the need for investing in human capital and formal jobs for the prosperity of the large Indian population.

According to estimates, sometime in April 2023, India's population will exceed the population of China.

**Why India should focus on human capital and formal jobs?**

A strong case for **human capital-driven productivity** is India's **software employment**. A meagre 0.8% of workers generate 8% of GDP.

The **remittances** from India's overseas population crossed \$100 billion last year. A **World Bank** report suggests that the **qualitative shift** during the previous five years from **low-skilled, informal employment in Gulf countries to high-skilled formal jobs in high-income countries** is significant.

Last year, the US replaced the UAE as the single biggest source country with 23% of remittances.

**Why are monetary and fiscal policies not solutions for resolving all growth-related challenges?**

Monetary policy is cannot resolve growth challenges as **credit availability** is a bigger problem in India than credit cost. If **fiscal deficits** could make countries rich, no country would be poor. **Global experiences** suggest where governments spend money and how this spending is financed matters more than how much is spent.

Covid made enormous **fiscal and monetary policy demands**. Western central banks are struggling to shrink their balance sheets. Rich-country borrowing rates have risen by 300% plus and inflation hurts the poor the most.

So, India avoided these fiscal and monetary policy excesses.

**What should be the focus area of the budget for generating human capital?**

The Finance Bill must target **productivity and continuity** by legislating **human capital and formal job reforms** previously proposed. The government should

**a)** Reduce the implementation timeline for the powerful **National Education Policy 2020** from 15 years to five years, **b)** Abolish **separate licensing requirements** for online degrees and freely allow all the 1,000-plus accredited universities to launch online learning, **c)** Notify the **four labour codes** for all central-list industries while appointing a tripartite committee to converge them into one labour code by the next budget, **d)** Continue **EODB reforms** by designating every enterprise's PAN number as its **Universal Enterprise Number**, **e)** Explode manufacturing employment by abolishing the **Factories Act** and requiring all employers to comply under each state's **Shops and Establishment Act**, **f)** Reduce the gap between documented salary and in hand salary by making employees' provident fund contributions optional but raising employer PF contributions from the current 12% to 13%.

**What is the difference between the Indian and Chinese scenarios?**

India and China's per capita GDP was equal in 1991. It is now five times higher for China. Unlike when China started serious reform in 1978, India today faces a more **unfavourable global context** of growth, exports, and manufacturing.



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China's reforms were faster and crisper without the **fixed costs of democracy**. But this deficit led to their unchallenged policies of **Cultural Revolution, one-child norm, and zero-Covid**. India's democracy is a strength. It reflects India's ability to **reconcile diverse aspirations**.

### 16. [Stay with science, go slow on GM crops Transgenic technology](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Stay with science, go slow on GM crops Transgenic technology**" published in **The Indian Express** on **22nd December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Science and Technology

**Relevance:** Recombinant technology.

**News:** The article explains the issues related to HT GM crops.

#### **Why precaution is required for the environmental release of GM crops?**

Transgenic technology is **uncontrollable and irreversible** after environmental release. Genetically Modified Organisms propagate themselves and proliferate. This process cannot be reversed.

Therefore, any **deliberate environmental release** has to be only after a thorough, **independent, peer-reviewed assessment** of long-term implications.

#### **What is the current status of GM crops across the world?**

More than 25 years after their introduction, GM crops are still globally grown in **just 29 out of 172 countries**. Moreover, 91% of GM crop area continues to be in just five countries named USA, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, and India.

Most countries in Europe and Japan, Israel, and Russia do not grow GM crops. In China, Bt cotton area has been declining and **non-GM hybrid technology** is used for rapeseed/mustard. Only two traits are present in over 85% of GM crops grown — **herbicide tolerance and insect resistance**.

#### **What are the issues with HT crops?**

HT crops result in not only **ecological damage** but **human health impacts** for consumers. Like tobacco, the effects take a longer time to manifest.

According to independent research on GM crops and associated herbicides, their impact on human health may be probable **carcinogenicity, neuro-toxicity, reproductive health problems, organ damage** etc.

The ongoing litigations in the Supreme Court are about serious shortcomings in our **regulatory regime**. Minutes of meetings of the regulatory body **GEAC** and the "**guidelines and protocols**" on the regulator's website reflect an absence of regulatory protocols for HT crops.

The **technical expert committee** appointed by the SC and the unanimous multi-party reports of **two parliamentary standing committees** have exposed serious lapses and inadequacies in **bio-safety testing** of HT crops.

#### **What are the concerns associated with the approval of GM mustard?**

GM mustard's yield increase claims were based on a comparison with an old, non-hybrid variety. There were several **higher-yielding mustard hybrids** that should have been the comparators. Now, it is claimed that DMH-11's **parental lines** will be very useful for breeding **better hybrids**. But, the countries with the highest yields in the world do not use this **GM HT technique**. The benefits claimed, hence, are therefore questionable.

No independent health expert participated in the committees that looked at GM mustard safety. To this day, **biosafety data** of GM mustard has not been posted on the regulator's website for **independent scrutiny**.

It is claimed **GM mustard** is necessary to reduce India's **edible oil import bill**. Most of the edible oil we import is **cheap, non-GM, palm oil**.



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### What is the way forward for yield improvement of mustard?

For mustard yield improvement, **safe agro-ecological solutions** such as the “**system of mustard intensification**” are showing significant yield increases. This technology should be promoted, not GM HT mustard of dubious yields and safety.

### 17. [API crisis, again: PLI in key pharma ingredients was supposed to reduce dependence on China. But the job's only partly done](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**API crisis, again: PLI in key pharma ingredients was supposed to reduce dependence on China. But the job's only partly done**” published in **The Times of India** on **22nd December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Economy

**Relevance:** India dependency on imports for APIs

**News:** The article discusses the impact of dependency on China for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and measures adopted by India to counter it.

What is the recent issue?

The prices of key Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), which are the essential ingredients in making medicines, have increased recently by 12-25%

This is because China has stocked basic medicines leading to a shortage in the supply chain and increase in the price.

Why India imports APIs from China?

India has the capability to make many key APIs. However, it is the cheap cost provided by China that has made India dependent on imports and incapable of making key APIs.

APIs and key starting materials used in the production made up 63% of total pharma imports for 2018-19. This highlights the need for India to reduce its imports.

What has the performance of PLI scheme in pharma ingredients?

India introduced a PLI scheme in July 2020 to encourage domestic manufacture of a target group of 41 products, including aspirin and penicillin.

According to the recent data, 51 companies had received approval under the PLI scheme to begin new plants to make APIs. However, only about 25-30% of the companies have begun manufacturing.

Even though India has prioritised the PLI scheme through budgetary support, it has not seen the desired result.

What is the way ahead?

India has a good history in pharmaceutical manufacturing and has all the capabilities. Therefore, India needs to use its strength and execute its PLI scheme rapidly to reduce its dependence on China.

### 18. [With India crossing China's population next year, how we can create mass prosperity](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**With India crossing China's population next year, how we can create mass prosperity**” published in **The Indian Express** on **22nd December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian economy and employment

**Relevance:** Issues related to the growth and development of economy

**News:** The article explains the need for investing in human capital and formal jobs for the prosperity of the large Indian population.

According to estimates, sometime in April 2023, India's population will exceed the population of China.

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### Why India should focus on human capital and formal jobs?

A strong case for **human capital-driven productivity** is India's **software employment**. A meagre 0.8% of workers generate 8% of GDP.

The **remittances** from India's overseas population crossed \$100 billion last year. A **World Bank** report suggests that the **qualitative shift** during the previous five years from **low-skilled, informal employment in Gulf countries to high-skilled formal jobs in high-income countries** is significant.

Last year, the US replaced the UAE as the single biggest source country with 23% of remittances.

### Why are monetary and fiscal policies not solutions for resolving all growth-related challenges?

Monetary policy is cannot resolve growth challenges as **credit availability** is a bigger problem in India than credit cost. If **fiscal deficits** could make countries rich, no country would be poor.

**Global experiences** suggest where governments spend money and how this spending is financed matters more than how much is spent.

Covid made enormous **fiscal and monetary policy demands**. Western central banks are struggling to shrink their balance sheets. Rich-country borrowing rates have risen by 300% plus and inflation hurts the poor the most.

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For mustard yield improvement, **safe agro-ecological solutions** such as the “**system of mustard intensification**” are showing significant yield increases. This technology should be promoted, not GM HT mustard of dubious yields and safety.



20. Taking the lead on regulation of digital assets

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Taking the lead on regulation of digital assets” published in **The Indian Express** on **23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Security

**Relevance:** measures to curb digital financial crimes

**News:** The G20’s Finance Track discussions came up with the regulation of Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs) to curb financial crimes such as money laundering and terror financing as a priority.

**What are the concerns linked to VDAs?**

VDAs are often misused for financial crimes. There is – **a)** lack of proper regulatory measures, **b)** lack of reporting and transparency norms, **c)** absence of international consensus on regulatory design.

Therefore, India has a critical role to play in shaping the global regulatory environment as it is **one of the highest-ranked countries in terms of VDA adoption** and also heading the presidency of G20.

**What measures can be taken by India?**

India can allow anti-money laundering (AML) authorities to have control over VDA transactions, have power to impose controls upon them and prosecute in the event of any misuse.

These principles are included in the Financial Action Task Force Guidelines on Virtual Asset Transactions (**FATF Guidelines**). These guidelines have been adopted by various jurisdictions, including the EU, Japan and Singapore.

**What are Financial Action Task Force Guidelines on Virtual Asset Transactions?**

It prescribes minimum **AML/CFT standards** that countries should use to prevent the **misuse of VDA transactions**. The Guidelines are applicable to VDA service providers of member states like India.

**The key features of guidelines are** – **a)** license/registration requirements and extensive reporting and record-keeping obligations for VDA service providers, **b)** verifying the customer and beneficiary’s identities for all transactions exceeding \$1,000, **c)** it requires VDA service providers to perform enhanced obligations such as tracking the customer’s IP address to ensure there are no links to illicit activities when a transaction is with a higher-risk country.

This AML/CFT framework in India exists under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)**. It also includes reporting obligations for overseas transactions that fall under the ambit of suspicious transactions.

However, PMLA does not apply to the VDA industry.

**What is the way ahead?**

Even though PMLA does not apply to VDAs, the **government has the power** to make the VDA industry come under the PMLA. This would make VDAs to report offshore transactions and be subject to regulatory framework.

Therefore, the current discussion of G20 on **VDAs** and India coming up with the **Digital Data Protection Bill and the Digital India Act** will ensure Indians and digital businesses operate under the **rights and responsibility framework**.



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### 21. [A tall order – on Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “A tall order”, published in Business Standard on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS Paper 3, Environment, Biodiversity Conservation

**News:** 15th Conference of Parties (COP 15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, has managed to conclude **Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)** agreement.

The agreement may prove to be tough to implement despite providing an elaborate financing mechanism.

Read – [Features of new COP 15 agreement](#)

#### **What are the challenges in achieving COP 15 agreement targets?**

The bulk of the world's vital bio-resources are unprotected. For example, at present only about 17 per cent of the terrestrial, and less than 10 per cent of the marine areas, are under some kind of protection.

Financing these targets would not be an easy task. It looks unachievable after looking at the result of commitment, of \$100 billion a year for the climate mitigation fund, by developed countries in 2009.

Living Planet Report 2022 of the Worldwide Fund for Nature reports that nearly 34,000 plant and 5,200 animal species, including one-eighth of the bird species, face the threat of extinction. Main reasons behind threats are Habitat destruction, over-exploitation, harmful anthropogenic activity, air and water pollution, and climate change.

#### **How India has been able to make changes to the agreement?**

India's suggestion to grant freedom to adopt the targets according to country's position, priorities and capabilities, has been adopted.

India was able to keep references to the agricultural and fisheries subsidies out of the agreement. Some of the desired goals of India, linked to indigenous people and knowledge have become part of agreement, such as:

- Sharing of monetary and non-monetary benefits with indigenous people, which is accruing from the utilisation of genetic resources
- Protection of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.

### 22. [The uncontrolled re-entries of satellites](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article “**The uncontrolled re-entries of satellites**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd December 2022**.

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

**Relevance–** Issues related to safety of space assets

**News–** The article explains the issue of uncontrolled re-entry of satellites.

#### **What are the stages of a rocket launch?**

Today, there are more than 6,000 satellites in orbit, most of them in **low-earth and geostationary orbits**.

Rockets have **multiple stages**. Once a stage has increased the rocket's altitude and velocity by a certain amount, the rocket sheds it.

Some rockets jettison all their larger stages before reaching the **destination orbit**. A smaller engine then moves the payload to its final orbit. Others carry the payload to the orbit, then perform a **deorbit manoeuvre** to begin their descent. In both cases, rocket stages come back down in controlled or uncontrolled ways.

#### **What is an uncontrolled re-entry?**

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In an uncontrolled re-entry, the rocket stage simply falls. Its path down is determined by its **shape, angle of descent, air currents** and other characteristics. It will also **disintegrate** as it falls.

Most rocket parts have landed in oceans principally because earth's surface has more water than land. But many have dropped on land as well.

Some pieces burn up entirely while others don't. But because of the speed at which they're travelling, debris can be deadly.

### **Why are scientists worried about the re-entries?**

Parts of a **SpaceX Falcon 9** that fell down in Indonesia in 2016 included two "refrigerator-sized fuel tanks". If re-entering stages still hold fuel, **atmospheric and terrestrial chemical contamination** is another risk.

The USA, it requires all launches to keep the chance of a casualty from a re-entering body to be below 0.01%. But the U.S. Air Force and NASA have waived this requirement on multiple occasions.

A July 2022 study by researchers in Canada found that this threshold is **arbitrary** and makes little sense in an era when **new technologies and mission profiles** enable **controlled re-entries**. Many places have also become more densely populated.

There is no **international binding agreement** to ensure rocket stages always perform controlled re-entries nor on the technologies with which to do so. The **Liability Convention 1972** requires countries to pay for damages, not prevent them.

A **2021 report of the International Space Safety Foundation** said, "an impact anywhere on an airliner with debris of mass above 300 grams would produce a **catastrophic failure**. It means all people on board would be killed".

### **How can the damages be minimised?**

Satellite bodies should aim for an ocean in order to avoid **human casualties**.

**Future solutions** should be extended to re-entering satellites as well. **Advances in electronics and fabrication** have made way for smaller satellites, which are easier to build and launch in large numbers.

### 23. [Why Beijing's rising maritime clout calls for a joint India-Japan nuclear submarine project](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article "**Why Beijing's rising maritime clout calls for a joint India-Japan nuclear submarine project**" published in the **Business Standard** on **23rd December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Indian economy

**Relevance**– Issues related to manufacturing sector

**News**– The article explains the status of the toy industry in India. It also explains the issues faced by this sector.

### **What are the changes in the toy sector in recent years?**

In the last four years, **India's imports** of toys, games and sports requisites and their parts and accessories declined 39%.

In the same period, **Chinese imports** dipped 45% in 2021-22.

In the case of only toys, exports increased by 61.38% in 2021-22. Imports of toys alone have dropped 70%.

### **What is the game-changer for the industry in terms of competing with Chinese imports?**

One of the major reasons for this **import-export shift** is a sharp increase in **basic customs duty** from 20 to 60% in February 2020.

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This was followed by the decision to bring toys under compulsory **Bureau of Indian Standards certification** starting January 1, 2021. This **quality control** became applicable to both domestic and overseas manufacturers.

### What is the current status of the toy industry in India?

According to the **Toy Association of India**, the size of the industry was around Rs **20,000 crore** in retail value in 2020. Out of this, only around Rs 5,000 crore came from **local manufacturing**. Based on a report by **IMARC**, a market research company, the Indian toys market size reached \$1.5 billion in 2022. It may touch \$3 billion by 2028, a compounded annual growth rate of 12.2%.

At present, India is exporting to around 30 countries.

**Local manufacturing** and the involvement of more micro entrepreneurs and start-ups is on the rise. More than 100 new registered manufacturers entered the sector in the last two years. Local production has gone up 20-30%.

### What are issues faced by the toy industry?

There are issues related to **quality**. A study by the **Quality Council of India** in 2019 showed that out of 121 different varieties of toys procured only 33% passed quality tests.

Mass manufacturers are not prepared to come under the **BIS umbrella** owing to the **level of paperwork and heavy compliances burden** it imposes. Majority of manufactures fall under the MSME segment.

Chinese toys are still available in the Indian market and only around 1,000 local manufacturers have registered under BIS.

In India, the number of **electronic manufacturers** is relatively low. We are specially importing **chips and ICs** from countries like China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

India still lacks a **R&D centre** or a design institute to drive the changes in the sector.

## 24. [Taking the lead on regulation of digital assets](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Taking the lead on regulation of digital assets**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Security

**Relevance:** measures to curb digital financial crimes

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According to the **Toy Association of India**, the size of the industry was around Rs **20,000 crore** in retail value in 2020. Out of this, only around Rs 5,000 crore came from **local manufacturing**. Based on a report by **IMARC**, a market research company, the Indian toys market size reached \$1.5 billion in 2022. It may touch \$3 billion by 2028, a compounded annual growth rate of 12.2%.

At present, India is exporting to around 30 countries.

**Local manufacturing** and the involvement of more micro entrepreneurs and start-ups is on the rise. More than 100 new registered manufacturers entered the sector in the last two years. Local production has gone up 20-30%.

#### **What are issues faced by the toy industry?**

There are issues related to **quality**. A study by the **Quality Council of India** in 2019 showed that out of 121 different varieties of toys procured only 33% passed quality tests.

Mass manufacturers are not prepared to come under the **BIS umbrella** owing to the **level of paperwork and heavy compliances burden** it imposes. Majority of manufactures fall under the MSME segment.

Chinese toys are still available in the Indian market and only around 1,000 local manufacturers have registered under BIS.

In India, the number of **electronic manufacturers** is relatively low. We are specially importing **chips and ICs** from countries like China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

India still lacks a **R&D centre** or a design institute to drive the changes in the sector.

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

### 28. [With REDD, the global economy can remunerate nations saving rainforests](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**With REDD, the global economy can remunerate nations saving rainforests**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

**Relevance:** About Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation’ (REDD).

**News:** The idea of incentivizing countries to protect forests first surfaced in the 2005 COP meeting held in Montreal. It was finally approved at COP meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt this year. About ‘Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation’ (REDD)

**Read here:** [REDD and REDD+](#)

**The key idea behind REDD:** Forests capture and store huge amounts of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). This is of great value in a world facing climate change.

The REDD mechanism has only been fully approved in 2022.

**About Coalition for Rainforest Nations:** *It has more than 50 members. The members are primarily tropical countries. Its purpose is to work within a UNFCCC framework and the COP meetings. The Coalition sends its representatives to these meetings to argue for its goals to be included in the COP agenda and produce papers supporting these arguments.*

About REDD offsets and Carbon credit

Claiming credits under the REDD system will require very good satellite imagery of forests with detailed case studies. Most member countries have been accumulating such data. In recent years, many American and European companies have announced they want to buy offsets to be carbon-neutral. So, there’s a huge increase in the market.

Why countries are incentivised to protect forests?

**a)** A hectare of tropical forest absorbs 50 to 100 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum, **b)** Forests are huge supports for biodiversity. The vast majority of the world’s animals, birds and insects, each with its own-natural service, live in forests.

**c)** Countries maintaining forests, found usually in developing economies. Hence, forests can produce carbon credits on the basis of the CO<sub>2</sub> they capture and store. These can be sold on international carbon markets. REDD offsets will take a significant part of this trade and provide resources to tropical countries.

The entire process of REDD offset was finally passed this year at COP-27. This offers a good future for REDD.

### 29. [India’s Chipko movement changed the world’s vision](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**India’s Chipko movement changed the world’s vision**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

**Relevance:** About India’s Chipko movement.

**News:** India’s Chipko movement has lessons for social movements globally.

What is the reason behind Chipko movement?

The biogeography of Chipko was shaped by both colonial and post-colonial administrations. This is because economically, locals were excluded from such forests, and often dealt with punitively and in an unaccountable manner.

During pre-Independence era

There was a steady attempt by the British authorities and the forest department to carve out large parts of forested areas in the middle and upper Himalayas for extraction. This is because of the British economic interests encompassed shipbuilding, the expansion of the railways, etc. The Britishers have done this by;

**a) Limiting local's access to land:** Demarcating lands as reserved and revenue forests to be used by the colonial regime and curtailing local community management and use of these.

**b) Converting forests into resources:** The colonial government has transformed some of the forests into monocultural plantations like pine to help build the railways, extract turpentine, etc. Situation after Post-independence

**a)** The contractor system used by the forest department for felling trees engaged labour from outside, **b)** The government allocated areas for cutting with little concern for the slopes and villages nearby, often leading to landslides, etc.

Chipko emerged as a reaction to all these pressures.

**Must read:** [The nature and scope of environmental movements in independent India](#)

What are the significances of the Chipko movement?

Chipko became extremely well-known in the 1980s. This is because, **1)** The movement had diverse groups of people uniting within it, **b)** The movement got the attention of people globally. The imagery of women hugging trees captured the imagination of people worldwide, **c)** Chipko is a showcase of complete social movement,

**Note:** Silent Valley movement in Kerala led to the creation of the ministry of environment and forests in Kerala.

Even today, Chipko had an enormous impact on India and the world's environmental vision and imagination. It offers new lessons to social movements globally.

### 30. [A busy navy's challenges](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**A busy navy's challenges**" published in **Business Standard** on **24th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Security.

**Relevance:** Challenges with the Indian Navy.

**News:** The Indian Navy has been expanding its fleet day by day. Despite this, challenges still exist for the Indian Navy.

**What are the challenges associated with the Indian Navy?**

**Delay in construction:** Ships required for the Indian Navy take **more than twice the time of China** which is around seven to nine years. Even after taking such a long time, required support such as the right long-range, air-defence missiles, heavyweight torpedoes, etc. remain missing.

**Inadequate number of ships:** 2019 and 2020 saw the commissioning of just one submarine and a corvette while 2018 saw no major addition to the fleet. Further, as per a report, no aircraft has landed on either of India's carriers in the last two years.

**Technological delay creating challenges:** China uses advanced technology in its ships with more fuel and a heavier weapons load. China is now planning for war on the sea with killer drones and unmanned vessels. It is also developing a naval base around the Indian Ocean rim.

**Limited defence budgets:** India has limited budgets for its defence due to which there are fewer orders given for the construction of ships. This ultimately hampers the Navy fleet. The Indian Navy mostly has old boats, and it requires changes with the new ones.

Therefore, there are multiple challenges with the Indian Navy, even though its fleet is expanding, and new additions are being made.



31. [On GM, follow the science](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “On GM, follow the science” published in **The Indian Express** on **24th December 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** Use of recombinant technology.

**News:** The article explains the issues related to the environmental release of the GM mustard variety called DMH-11.

GM is a disruptive technology because it can bring about targeted changes in crop varieties that cannot be achieved through normal breeding of plant lines.

**What is the need for hybrid technology?**

Hybrid plants that result from the crossing of **genetically diverse parents** generally demonstrate **higher yields and wider adaptation**.

Hybrids typically show **20-25% yield increases** over conventional varieties. It can play an important role in boosting the yields of rapeseed mustard. India's current mustard yield is 1.2-1.3 tonnes per hectare. It is roughly half of the global average.

In 2021-22, India spent Rs 1,56,800 crore on the import of 14.1 mt of edible oils. Hybrid technology can lead to **the reduction of import dependence** on edible oil.

**What is the role of GM hybrids?**

Hybrid seed production requires an **efficient male sterility and fertility-restoration system**. The purpose is to ensure that one of the **parent lines** can be crossed with the pollen from only the other parent, even as the resultant plant is fertile.

The existing mustard hybrids have limitations of **sterility breakdown** under certain environmental conditions. It results in **lower seed purity**.

The **GM “Barnase-Barstar” system** provides an alternative route for hybridisation in mustard that is robust and addresses the **sterility breakdown** problems. This technology has been successfully deployed in other countries.

DMH-11 uses the **“barnase-barstar” system** with some improvements to breed the hybrid.

**What are the arguments against the allegations of safety on GM mustard?**

DMH-11 has undergone all the required **regulatory testing processes**. It was tested in confined field trials at multiple locations. It showed around 28% higher yield over the national best mustard variety **Varuna**.

It has been subjected to all the biosafety tests required under the officially stipulated guidelines and rules.

The doubters have questioned the safety of the three genes called **Barnase, Barstar and Bar** that are used to develop GM mustard. Extensive studies on GM mustard lines have established their safety.

The final allegation levelled against DMH-11 is that it will promote **use of herbicides**. The Bar gene does confer resistance to the **herbicide glufosinate**. But the gene has been used as a selectable marker in tissue culture during the breeding process.

The **herbicide-tolerance trait** in both the **Barnase female and Barstar male lines** is to be exploited only for the production of hybrid seed and not in the **commercial cultivation** of hybrids. The GEAC has also approved herbicide use only for hybrid seed production.

GM crops are today grown in over 30 countries. **Adoption rates** of GM traits have been more than 95% in some cases with no evidence of adverse effects.