



**9 PM**

# **Compilation**

**2<sup>nd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

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# General

# Studies

# Paper – 1

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### General Studies - 1

#### 1. [Working-age population on the decline](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Working-age population on the decline**” published in the **Livemint** on **2nd January 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About the declining working-age population.

**News:** In the majority of the developed countries working-age population is on the decline.

About the declining working-age population in major economies

According to the **UN’s World Population Prospects 2022** (WPP2022) report, the global fertility rate, which stood at 2.3 overall in 2021, will hit the demographic tipping point of 2.1 by 2050. This is owing to a globally synchronized decline in birth rates, including in Africa and Latin America.

The report also pointed out that worldwide, persons aged 65 or over outnumbered children under five for the first time in 2018. By the middle of this century, there will be twice as many senior citizens as people under five, and around as many as the total number of people under 12.

Fertility rates have dropped below the replacement level in all eurozone countries, and they are strikingly low in Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan—the five wealthiest East Asian economies, omitting China.

At 0.81 and 1.38, respectively, South Korea and Hong Kong’s 2021 fertility rates are among the lowest in the world. The US fertility rate has more than halved over since 1960, falling from 3.7 to 1.66 in 2021.

About the declining working-age population in China and India

**The situation of India:** An emerging-market powerhouse like India is experiencing a population decline. For instance, India recorded fertility rates of 2.03 in 2021 and 2.05 the year before. This is the first time the country had fallen below the replacement rate.

**The situation in China:** The Chinese government ended its 35-year-old one-child policy in 2016. However, China’s fertility rate stood at just 1.16 in 2021, down from as high as 6.3 as recently as 1968.

Today, every 100 working-age Chinese need to support 20 retirees. If trends continue, by the turn of the next century, every 100 workers will have to support 120 retirees.

What will be the impact of the declining working-age population?

**a)** High-income economies will face increased pension and healthcare costs, **b)** The absence of more immigration will lower household consumption and economic growth, **c)** Historically, per capita output growth has accounted for around half of average annual world economic growth, with the other half coming from population growth. The declining working-age population will upset this balance, **d)** Many countries may adopt aggressively pro-natalist policies.

Why do population incentivising policies will not stop the declining working-age population?

According to Nobel laureate economist Gary Becker, the demand for children responds to changes in the price of the “marginal child”. Such policies tend to emphasize financial incentives, such as paid maternity leave, “bonuses” for couples that have children, monthly grants for mothers who take time off work to raise a third child, and personal tax deductions to cover childcare expenses.

But these inducements have not proven especially effective. For instance, despite France’s population incentivising policies, its fertility rate stood at just 1.83 in 2021.

How nations can overcome the declining working-age population?

**International migration from low-income, high-fertility countries** to those with higher average incomes and lower birth rates has helped shield the declining working-age population.

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International migration has helped high-income countries sustain economic growth and ease the burden of supporting their growing elderly populations, including by keeping state pensions on a sustainable path.

So, the countries need to **recognize the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between low- and high-fertility countries.**

### 2. [NFDC merger: In unified National Film Corporation, a theatre of the absurd](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**NFDC merger: In unified National Film Corporation, a theatre of the absurd**” published in **The Indian Express** on **5th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS1- Indian culture

**Relevance**– Issues related to regulation of film industry

**News**– The article explains the restructuring of film-related bodies in India. It also explains the issues related with this move.

**What is the restructured form of film bodies in India?**

The film related bodies in India have been **restructured**. The **Films Division, National Film Archives of India, Directorate of Film Festivals, Children’s Film Society of India** have closed.

**National Film Development Corporation** with an **expanded charter** will carry forward the activities hitherto performed by these departments in the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. This has been undertaken on the basis of recommendations submitted by an **expert committee** headed by retired I&B secretary **Bimal Julka**.

The logic behind this move is that a single corporation will lead to **synergy** amongst the various activities. It will lead to **better and efficient utilisation** of infrastructure and manpower.

**What are the issues with the new arrangement?**

The **infrastructure** has been dismantled. All **specialists** within these structures have been declared as surplus, without any designations attached to them. They are waiting to be redeployed in any government department.

The **logic of synergy** raises some concerns. As per the arrangement in place now, the NFDC is producing feature films and DFF decides the **national film awards**.

As per new arrangements, the NFDC will be producing feature films and non-feature films. It will also decide whether its own films or others will win national awards. It is an absurd exercise. It creates **conflict of interest**.

### 3. [The State blurs the distinction between legal and illegal — and punishes the poor](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The State blurs the distinction between legal and illegal — and punishes the poor**” published in **The Indian Express** on **6th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS1- Urbanisation

**Relevance**– Issues related to land in urban areas

**News**– The article explains the issues of illegal encroachment in urban areas.

**Why is illegal encroachment of land prevalent in India?**

**Encroachment** on land belonging to government authorities is a big issue. This is despite the **strictures of the master plan**.

In our cities, land zoned for agricultural purposes has been converted to farmhouses. These areas eventually transform from being “**unauthorised**” to “**authorised**”.

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In case of **greenfield developments**, land politics takes place. Complex **financial and administrative arrangements** are utilised by both private and government agents for illegal acts upon the land.

Village lands acquired by the state are frequently taken over by well-off citizens and private developers who build private property across them. The land taken over by private companies and individuals eventually converts to **legal estate**.

Poor migrants to the city also occupy spaces in **ad hoc ways**. This requires dealing with the state, land mafias, corrupt bureaucracies and the original landowners who sell their lands for “illegal” occupation. It produces a **fragile urban environment**.

### **What are the challenges related to illegal encroachment of land?**

The government action on illegal occupation depends on who occupies this land. It leads to **dislocation of people**. It **institutionalised the illegality** that is nurtured by the state.

The strategy of dealing with encroachments through **demolitions and evictions** mainly affect the poor. It damages already vulnerable lives while also failing as **public policy**. It offers no **long-lasting solution** to the problems of making better cities in any way.

It **diminishes public welfare** by depriving populations of **educational, financial, and residential security** without any meaningful positive outcomes. It cannot offer any solutions to real-world problems like housing, or public infrastructure.

### **What is the way forward to the problem of encroachment?**

There is a need for **holistic urban planning** that is not fractured. Multiple authorities should not be allowed free play over lands owned by them. This requires thinking of the city as an **organism with complex social needs**, rather than merely an economic entity.

Courts should recognise their role as **protectors** of citizens from the **arbitrariness of state action**. Cities need to develop a **sense of compassion** for urban life at its margins.

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# General Studies Paper –2

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General Studies - 2

1. [India's dilemmas in an Asian century](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**India's dilemmas in an Asian century**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**Relevance**– Emerging global order and Implications for India.

**News**– The article explains the emergence of the Asian century and its implications for stability of global order. It also explains the dilemmas presented by emerging global order before Indian foreign policy establishment

**What are important geopolitical developments taking place across Asia?**

Emergence of the **Asian century** appears to be a certainty.

The geopolitical and economic rise of Asia coincides with several **regional and global developments**. These have potential to undermine the **stability and prosperity** India had hoped an Asian century would bring.

The **withdrawal of the U.S.** from much of continental Asia, **aggressive rise of China** and the Ukraine war appear to have ended the **coexistence of Asia**.

Today, Russia and China are trying to undermine the **global balance of power**. Several regional powers such as Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are in tow.

**What will be the shape of the Asian century and its impacts on the stability of global order?**

There can be no meaningful Asian century in a unipolar world. One Alternative to a **unipolar world** is a **multipolar world** with Russia, China, Japan, India and other smaller powers asserting themselves on the global stage. The other alternative is a **China-dominated Asia**.

It is clear that a China-dominated Asia won't serve **India's geopolitical interests**. A multipolar world with **new and shifting alliances; and competing coalitions** for dominance will take away the relative 'stability' of the current world order.

**What is the Indian version of multipolarity?**

For India, multipolarity is premised on the **rule of law or peaceful coexistence**. India values respect for the **sovereignty and territorial integrity** of all countries, resolution of international disputes through **peaceful negotiations**, and **free and open access** for all to the **global commons**.

**What can be the implication of multipolar South Asia for global financial order?**

It would lead to sharpening of opposition against the current **global financial order**.

The **weaponization of trade**, sanctions against Russia will pose serious challenges to dollar-based trade and Western payment systems such as SWIFT.

The Ukraine war has led to a serious search in parts of Asia for **alternative trading arrangements and payment mechanisms**.

**What is the dilemma created by multipolar Asia before Indian foreign policy establishment?**

New Delhi has consistently campaigned for a multipolar world where key Asian powers have a major role in international politics. Yet it may hesitate to engage the **emergent Asian century** for various reasons.

The Indian establishment has a deeply **status quoist view** of the world order. It believes in a more **democratic, orderly and rules-based world order**. But, it recognises that major **systemic changes** could create chaos. Therefore, India likes **peaceful and consensual transformation** of the system. It is not happening today.

New Delhi's biggest fear would be an Asian century without **stable multipolarity**. Even if it emerges, a **multipolar world** is most likely to be soon replaced by a **bipolar world** dominated by

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the U.S. and China. It would be a **bad deal**. In such a scenario, India will often be targeted by China.

If a bipolar world leads to **great power accommodation** between the U.S. and China, India's situation could be worse off. It means the U.S. accepting **China's sphere of influence**.

The **Asian century** dominated by China may lead to **post-Indian South Asia** that is under the Chinese sphere of influence, though not entirely inimical to Indian interests.

### 2. [India-China: between pre-1962 and now](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**India-China: between pre-1962 and now**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd January 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- India and its neighbourhood relationship

**Relevance**– Bilateral relationship between India and China

**News**– The article explains the similarities and differences between India-China bilateral relations and the situation along LAC in the 1960s and now.

**What are the differences between India- China bilateral conduct in the 1960s and now?**

The focus in the 1950s was on the “**territorial dispute**” of Aksai Chin and NEFA. Today, China is firmly in occupation of Aksai Chin and India is firm in guarding its **territorial integrity** in Arunachal Pradesh. The immediate issue is **transgressions** along the LAC.

The differences in the western sector are no longer confined to the **Daulet Beg Oldie and Demchok** as was the case in earlier decades. China is now seeking claims in the **Depsang, Galwan, Pangong Lake and Hot Springs areas**.

The **border infrastructure** on the Indian side was in poor condition earlier. But now, India is rapidly building its border infrastructure.

In 1962, India was forced to approach the U.S. and other Western countries for **military assistance** to meet the Chinese challenge. In the current phase, India has rapidly inducted new weapon systems.

In the 1950s, China did not claim **open support** for Pakistan, including on Kashmir. China's support for Pakistan on Kashmir became self-apparent in the 1960s. Today, China openly works with Pakistan against India's interests .

The biggest difference between the situation in the 1960s and now is the **political will** of the Modi government and the determination of the Indian army to block Chinese patrols.

**What has not changed in their bilateral relations?**

Traditionally, China has enjoyed an advantage in terms of **terrain and logistics** in Tibet. China has always projected a **spurious interpretation** of the LAC. It has shied away from clarifying its position through exchanges of large-scale maps.

China's **internal vulnerabilities** have always impacted bilateral relations with India. Tibet has remained a source of insecurity for China.

In the late 1950s, Mao Zedong adopted an **aggressive stance** towards India for consolidating his leadership in the face of **internal challenges** and avoiding criticism of disastrous political and economic policies.

Today, Mr. Xi is facing challenges for the dreadful **Zero-COVID policy, and growing authoritarianism**. The tendency to create **external diversions** is a common thread.

The LAC between India and China is frequently open to challenge by either side. There are areas along the LAC that have been patrolled by both sides in the past.

In the middle, the **Barahoti pasture** north of Chamoli in Uttarakhand has been at the centre of the dispute for the past seven decades.

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In the eastern sector, the international boundary and the LAC are defined by the **1914 McMahon Line**. Yet, China seeks to make inroads in the Tawang sector, Upper Subansiri region, and near the tri-junction with Myanmar.

### 3. [The success of translations has bridged the gap between writing in Indian regional languages and Indian writing in English](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The success of translations has bridged the gap between writing in Indian regional languages and Indian writing in English**” published in **The Indian Express** on **2nd January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Indian literature

**News**– The article explains the status of vernacular literature in India

The International Booker Prize was awarded to **Tomb of Sand**. It is an English translation of **Geetanjali Shree Hindi novel Ret Samadhi**.

**What is the status of literature in vernacular?**

These languages have substantially smaller numbers of speakers than Hindi. But they have large readership and a vibrant literary sphere.

**JCB award** is given to the best Indian novel published in English or translated into English from any Indian language. For the last three years, it has gone to novels originally written in Malayalam. This year it has gone to translation from Urdu.

Over the last two decades, novels from the Indian language have been translated into English. They have occupied a larger space in the **literary ecosystem**. The Bhojpuri novel **Phoolsungi** translated into English in 2020 has made waves.

All these novels were written in the 20th or 21st century in **Western-realist mode**. They deal with modern **social-historical themes**. Phoolsungi depicts indigo cultivation and the coming of railways in Bihar.

**How the differences between vernacular literature and Indian literature in English have reduced with time?**

Ever since Bankim Chander, the majority of writers in all Indian languages have been well versed in English while preferring to write in their own languages.

The difference between the vernacular writers and Indian writing in English has not been much of **sensibility and quality**. It is about **language affiliation and social class**.

But now vernacular literature has emerged equal to Indian writing in English and enjoys a substantial demographic dividend.

The deep bilingualism that has always coexisted between English and Indian languages at literary level seems now to be breaching linguistic borders.

### 4. [Equity in healthcare: Aim For More Than Just More AIIMS](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Aim For More Than Just More AIIMS**” published in **The Times of India** on **2nd January 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About achieving equity in healthcare.

**News:** India’s primary level can take care of almost 70-75% of the population’s healthcare needs. About 20-25% is addressed at the secondary level. Around 5-10% need tertiary-level care.

More AIIMS-like institutions are required to promote equity in India’s healthcare environment.

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What is equity in healthcare means?

In healthcare, equity means two things **a)** People with the same health needs get the same care (horizontal equity) and **b)** People with an advantage take on a greater share of the responsibility for paying for health services (vertical equity).

A pursuit of excellence or equity is conditioned by one's background and training. For example, as a general principle, clinicians are trained to support excellence and public health people advocate equity.

Excellence is a measure of the quality of care and equity is a measure of access to care. Both are important. For instance, equity has no meaning if excellence is not a part of it and, excellence is wasted if restricted to a few. So, neither equity nor excellence is achieved without effort.

**Read more:** [\[Kurukshetra December Summary\] e-Governance in Healthcare Services Delivery – Explained, pointwise](#)

How India can achieve equity in healthcare?

**a)** India needs to **stop seeing excellence as an individual choice** and pursuit, but rather as a health system goal. For this to happen, a sharing of a vision of excellence by all levels of leadership is needed.

**b)** India needs to **change the work ethos at all levels to reinforce quality and rigour** and ensure commensurate investment in infrastructure and human resources.

**c)** India needs **newer AIIMS-like institutions** to achieve the 'excellence' of AIIMS New Delhi will need time and effort.

**d)** Promoting equity requires a **reconceptualisation of the health system** itself, especially healthcare financing so that barriers to access are removed.

**e)** India needs **smaller health and wellness centres near villages** with appropriate size, each catering to the population subset that needs primary, secondary or tertiary care.

Overall, India should ensure providing equity in healthcare is a population-level outcome.

### 5. [When degrees lose their worth](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**When degrees lose their worth**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd January 2023**.

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

**Relevance**– Higher education

**News**– The article explains the phenomena of increasing emphasis on gaining more degrees and certificates.

**What is the reason behind the increasing proliferation of degrees in our educational system?**

A **vast and varied market of qualifications** has grown since the mid-1990s. Its growth feeds on itself. If a greater variety of qualifications are on offer, their demand grows faster. A young candidate enrolled in one course wants to enrol in other courses. Permission for **dual degree admission** has further boosted the urge.

The driving force of this urge is located both within and outside the system of education. Internally, the system encourages students to gather **additional qualifications** by defining course content and its aims narrowly. It is known as **specialisation**. This phenomenon is a response to the understanding of skills as distinct from knowledge.

The **external driving force** is the economy. Economic growth has not resulted in expansion of **satisfying employment**. The fear of **joblessness** fuels the urge to gain **new eligibility**. The volatility of the job market also implies that no job can last for long. Hence, candidates want to become eligible for as many types of jobs as possible.

### **Why has the experiment of delinking degrees from jobs in 1980 has not been successful?**

It was believed that delinking degrees from jobs will reduce the pressure on institutions of higher learning. If jobs were delinked from **formal qualification**, it would discourage the young from accumulating certificates and degrees.

But, the pressure to enrol in one course or another remained high. **Correspondence courses** proliferated. Later, the Internet also enabled the **self-learning market**. It has boosted **self-employment** to some extent. But, the lure of **formal jobs** has not diminished.

In fact, it has maintained remarkably high growth in the **coaching market**. Competitive exams now attract countless youths.

### **How the emphasis on degrees and qualification has impacted our educational system?**

It has led to **lowering of standards** in the field of higher education. When a course does not give expected benefits, students go for a higher level of the same course.

**Public institutions** of higher education have suffered due to it. These are unable to maintain standards while being forced to accommodate an increased number of students. It has resulted in the **mass exodus** to foreign systems and expensive private institutions. Students from deprived strata can't avail of these options.

It has led to a **fall in standards of teaching** and also in the **expected diligence** of students. Digital technology has made its own contribution to the noticeable changes in student behaviour. A plethora of reforms introduced may not succeed in resolving the **basic issues and tendencies**. There is a considerable gap between the **discourse of reform** and the reality of our higher education system.

### 6. [Towards reducing India's prison footprint](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Towards reducing India's prison footprint**" published in **The Hindu** on **3<sup>rd</sup> January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 2 – Governance**

**Relevance:** measures needed to prevent overcrowding of prisons

**News:** Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi in June last year directed the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to allocate land to Delhi's prison department to construct a district prison complex in Narela to prevent overcrowding.

#### **How is the district prison complex in Delhi being built up?**

The prison is to be constructed in two phases, the first for high-risk offenders and the second for undertrials.

In phase 1, a high-security jail is to be built in the complex with a capacity to lodge 250 high-risk prisoners.

**High walls are being constructed between cells** to prevent prisoners from viewing others, and interacting with each other, as well as **building office spaces between cells to facilitate surveillance**.

The Delhi prison administration is **creating solitary confinement** which can have a severe harmful effect on prisoners' mental health.

Therefore, L-G's claim to decongest Delhi's prison complexes by setting up prisons in Narela is not appreciable and not a proper way of preventing overcrowding.

#### **What are the reasons behind overcrowding of prisons?**

One of the reasons behind it is that India has not done enough to truly prevent crime. **Dalits and Adivasis** are over-represented in Indian prisons.

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As per a report, social, systemic, legal, and political barriers are the reason behind this. Laws such as the Habitual Offenders Act and Beggary Laws allow the police to target Dalit and Adivasis for reported crimes.

Furthermore, prisons in India are still governed by the colonial law **Prisons Act, 1894**. It treats prisoners as sub-par citizens, and provides for strict punishment rather than rehabilitation.

**What can be the way ahead?**

**President Murmu said** that rather than building more prisons to prevent overcrowding we must adopt measures like **releasing unwell or old inmates, reducing penalties, allowing bail at affordable costs, etc.**

India is a progressing country, so its **approach to crime should be preventive rather than reactive.**

Therefore, the L-G should work with the Delhi government to channel public funds towards public goods such as housing, education, and employment, so that crimes could be prevented.

### 7. [The case against- state control of Hindu temples](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“The case against state control of Hindu temples”** published in **The Hindu** on **3rd January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Significant provisions of Indian constitution.

**Relevance**– Issues related to secularism in India

**News**– The article explains the issue of state governments managing the affairs of Hindu religious endowments.

**What are the constitutional provisions for state regulating secular activities associated with religious practices?**

**Article 25(2)(b)** empowers the state to provide for **social welfare** and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions” to “all classes and sections of Hindus”. Hence, the issue of regulating **secular aspects of religious practice** is distinct from providing **access to worship**.

**What are the judicial precedents for state management of temples?**

In the **Shirur Mutt judgement (1954)** case, Supreme Court impugned many provisions of the Madras **Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, 1951**. It termed these provisions as **“extremely drastic”** in character. Even the Advocate General of Madras stated that he “could not support the legality of these provisions”.

The legislature of the erstwhile Madras State enacted in 1954 an **amendment Act** for removing the defects pointed out by the Supreme Court. Again, the Act was struck down by Madras High Court.

The **Orissa Hindu Religious Endowments Act, 1939** was struck down by the Supreme Court twice in 1954 and 1956.

**What are issues with the state management of temples?**

In the guise of administering Hindu religious endowments, the states are **interfering in religious affairs**. This is more prevalent in Tamil Nadu where temples cannot even conduct pujas as the state has depleted their income.

As per the HR&CE policy note of 2012-13 of Tamil Nadu, Hindu temples own land covering 29 crore sq. ft in area. Its estimated value would be almost ₹10 lakh crore. But the income realised by the Tamil Nadu HR&CE Department is ₹120 crore per year.

The state is silencing temple activists by initiating **arbitrary criminal action** against them.

The Tamil Nadu HR&CE Department does not even have records of its own **executive notifications** justifying its management of certain temples.

**What is the way forward?**

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A long line of judicial precedents emphasise that **secularism** means the state cannot mix with religion. Nothing justifies a state official directing a religious functionary for conducting worship. The purpose should be to involve the community, which has been excluded by the state. The participation of **different stakeholders** and the building of **consensus** among them will determine who will take over temples.

### 8. [Mountainous Question – China’s growing influence in Nepal means India’s diplomacy and project delivery will need to improve](#)

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

**“Why China is happy with Nepal’s new PM”** published in the **Indian Express** on **3rd January 2022**.

**“Mountainous Question – China’s growing influence in Nepal means India’s diplomacy and project delivery will need to improve”** published in the **The Times of India** on **3rd January 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About India-Nepal relations.

**News:** Recently, Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda” has become the new Prime Minister of Nepal. He was the leader of the third-largest party in parliament and was not even considered a serious contender for the post. But some last-minute political moves ensured his Prime Ministership.

He will face a mandatory vote of confidence in parliament. His failure to secure a vote of confidence would work in favour of the single-largest party which, under such circumstances, would gain the first opportunity to form the government as per article 76(3) of the constitution.

What are the Chinese concerns with the previous government in Nepal?

The previous PM **dampened the prospects of the execution of China’s Belt and Road Initiative** by stating that Nepal would prefer projects under grants over loans.

The Nepal parliament also ratified the \$-500 million Millenium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact in February. This effectively overruled Chinese objections and awarded two mega hydroelectricity power projects — West Seti and Seti Water — with a combined production capacity and worth of 1200 MW and \$2.4 billion to the US.

Hence, China sent multiple messages that attest to engagement with and interest in recent developments in Nepal.

**Must read:** [What West Seti power project can mean for India-Nepal ties](#)

Why China is happy with Nepal’s new PM?

The new PM was inspired by the ideologies of Mao Zedong. China’s acting ambassador met the Nepalese PM to congratulate him on the same day as his elevation.

He also conveyed that China had lifted the suspension of business and supply of goods from the Rasuwa-Kerung and Hilsa-Parang 2 checkpoints that had not been commissioned for use since the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

A high-level Chinese team was already in Kathmandu to conduct a feasibility study for the ambitious Kerung-Kathmandu railway line, a major project under the BRI.

**Read more:** [India-Nepal relations has been deteriorated in recent times and need to be strengthened](#)

What India can do to counter the Chinese involvement in Nepal?

-India needs to reach out and **build equally robust ties with all political stakeholders** in Nepal, be they on the left, right or centre.

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-Given its geographic position, it is natural for Nepal to seek infrastructure investment from both India and China. India should be competitive and prove to Nepal that **Indian projects are best suited for the Himalayan nation** than the Chinese.

-Many Indian projects in the past were marred by delays due to local environmental objections, cost overruns and the selection of poor local contractors. Hence, India should help Nepal correct these and deliver on big-ticket infrastructure like the Arun III hydroelectric project by the scheduled deadlines.

-Further, India should also **maintain close political communication** to avoid disputes like the one over territory in the Kalapani region

### 9. [The New Year looks decidedly gloomy in India's political neighbourhood](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"The New Year looks decidedly gloomy in India's political neighbourhood"** published in the **Business Standard** on **3rd January 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About challenges in India's political neighbourhood.

**News:** Three key Indian neighbourhood countries with which India has economic ties — Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal — are facing risks that appear to be worsening.

What are the risks associated with India's political neighbourhood?

**Sri Lanka:** Its economic crisis needs International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans – a combination of the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) and the Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

But for that, Sri Lanka will have to reach a deal with its bilateral creditors, principally, India, Japan and China that the terms of their loans do not work at cross purposes with the IMF loan.

**Bangladesh:** It also having economic trouble. The collapse of global trade, on which the economy is acutely dependent, and high oil prices have hit the economy hard. There is a "sharp widening of the current account deficit, the rapid decline of foreign exchange reserves, rising inflation and slowing growth" in Bangladesh.

Due to these, the country has just signed a 42-month arrangement to secure a \$3.2-billion IMF loan under ECF and EFF, with another \$1.3 billion under the climate-linked Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF).

**Nepal:** The general elections had led to no clear verdict. Recently, the country finally got a new government in place with a left-wing orientation. The previous government's repair work was made necessary by the IMF loan. The current inflation rate of 8.08%.

**Pakistan:** Standard & Poor recently reduced the sovereign rating to CCC-plus. This puts it deep in junk grade.

The supply shock-led crisis in South Asia highlights the policy missteps of different governments. The growth of South Asia now depends on how the countries implement the IMF support programmes.

### 10. [A late but right call by Kerala Governor](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"A late but right call by Kerala Governor"** published in **The Hindu** on **4th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Indian Polity

**Relevance:** Role of Governor

**News:** Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has finally decided to reinstate former Minister Saji Cheriaan into the Cabinet and administer the oath. However, he was initially reluctant.

**What does the Constitution say regarding oath?**



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**Article 164(3)** provides that the Governor shall administer the oaths of office and secrecy to a Minister before he assumes office.

The **Schedule III of the Constitution** lays out the oath of office and oath of secrecy for a Minister of a State. The oaths are prescribed for various constitutional posts, including Ministers and judges, and without it, one cannot assume office.

A person can become a minister if he is an MLA or MLC and has not suffered any disqualification provided under the Constitution.

In the present case, the concerned minister was made to resign for his anti-constitutional speech but was not disqualified.

However, there have been instances where the Governor has refused to administer the oath.

### **Can a Governor refuse to administer the oath?**

This issue came up in 1978. Vasantha Pai got elected as a Member of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Council from the graduate constituency.

It is a requirement under **Article 188** that the elected person should be administered the oath by the Governor or a person appointed on his behalf under Schedule III.

However, the Governor nominated Pro-tem Chairman to administer the oath on his behalf but Vasantha Pai did not want to take oath before him.

So, he expressed his wish in front of the then Governor of Tamil Nadu and informed him that he would like to be administered the oath by him. After not getting any answer, he sent a telegram asking him to fix a date for the oath.

However, he later sent his oath **in the form prescribed in Schedule III** duly signed by him to the Governor. He referred to Article 188 and said that it was the Constitutional duty of the Governor to administer the oath.

He also filed a **writ petition before the Madras High Court** and asked for the declaration that he has followed the constitutional requirement of taking oath before assuming office.

The court allowed his case and he entered the legislative council successfully.

Therefore, the same could have happened if the Kerala Governor would have refused to administer the oath and a governor cannot refused to administer the oath as it his constitutional duty.

### 11. For great road safety, India needs a change in mindset

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**For great road safety, India needs a change in mindset**” published in **The Indian Express** on **4th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Government policies and interventions

**News**– The article explains the issue of road safety in India.

#### **What are the reasons behind increasing road accidents in India?**

**Human error** on the roads is the single-largest factor responsible. There are frequent violations of lane driving, speed limits and traffic signals and at-will parking on highways.

There is **administrative and political apathy** toward road safety. Road users are lacking the understanding of the basic traffic rules and road signage.

There is **easier access** to driving licences without a meaningful ground scrutiny of skills.

In case of a serious road crash, charges are framed against the erring drivers. They are not framed against the road-safety public officials for **non-performance**.

At the macro level, various institutions of road safety are engaged in **routine paperwork** and lack **accountability**.

#### **What is the way forward for road safety in India?**

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The **enforcement of traffic norms** is the key to road safety. The priority goal should be to significantly reduce the rising number of road crashes.

There is a need for **regular and professional enforcement of rules. Swift and innovative solutions** by the administration could help in evolving a healthy safe-road culture.

A **new Motor Vehicles Act** is required. Along with it, **decentralised federal structure** and the **Supreme Court committee on road safety** and its **regular monitoring** of the related issues is key to road safety. A **specific regime** whereby road safety authorities are given clear targets for reducing road crashes over a defined period should be priority.

Parts of major roads and highways should be set up as **“ideal” road safety zones**. These zones will promote locally **suitable, comprehensive safe road practices**.

To begin with, identify the two worst roads in a specific area:

- Notify each identified road as a **Zone of Excellence** in road safety
- Provide road **written instructions** on road-surface and road signage
- Take care to provide lanes for emergency vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians etc, as feasible
- Ensure adherence to basic traffic rules. Create **multiple checkpoints every 2-4 kms**. Each checkpoint should be supported by road safety volunteers in addition to police
- Use tech aids, judiciously combined with **manual interventions and volunteers**
- Supplement enforcement with road safety **awareness measures**
- Station ambulances and lift cranes for swift response to accidents
- Make reliable arrangements with **hospitals and trauma centres** through formal MoUs

The **administrative structure** for the implementation of road safety can be set up in **three tiers**.

**Tier 1** would be the **Managing Group**. It would look after **day-to-day operations** and would be **autonomous and financially empowered**. It will have representatives from the police, transport and health sectors, the public works department and public representatives.

**Tier 2** would have **district level monitoring**. It would also ensure adherence to targets.

**Tier 3** would have top management and control, represented at the level of the Union or state government. At this level, a **dynamic road-safety ecosystem** would be developed. Existing **road safety institutions** would either be dismantled or rejuvenated. There would be monthly reviews, with **directions, accountability and disciplinary action**.

### 12. [India@75, Looking@100 – on healthcare sector in India](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“India@75, Looking@100”** published in **The Indian Express** on **4th January 2023**.

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

**News**– The article explains the problems faced by healthcare sectors and measures needed to improve the provision of healthcare services in India.

#### **What are the issues faced by the healthcare sector in India?**

There is a **shortage of manpower** in the healthcare sector. Multiple roles are assigned to staff.

There is a lack of facilities for **specialised treatment** in our hospitals.

#### **What is the way forward for providing better healthcare services in India?**

**Timely recruitment and appointment** of medical and paramedical staff is needed.

Nursing school education & information may quickly become outdated because the healthcare field is constantly changing and progressing. **Adequate and appropriate training** of medical and paramedical staff is critical.

There is a need for enough officers to conduct training sessions. A **thorough review** of the process is necessary so as to ensure that our trainees receive the best education.

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Our focus, for the next 25 years, should be on **preventative healthcare**. These measures should be introduced in schools at early ages and in community spaces across the country.

A greater focus on **immunisation and sensitisation campaigns** would ensure better healthcare for the population.

### [13. It is crucial for India to embrace multi-domain operations](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**It is crucial for India to embrace multi-domain operations**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Security

**News**– The article explains the concept of multi-domain operations and its relevance for India. It also explains the steps needed to embrace the concept of MDO.

#### **What is the concept of Multi Domain Operations?**

It is not just actions on land, in sea, air, cyber, space and in the electromagnetic spectrum. It comprises operations conducted across **multiple domains and contested spaces**.

It needs **convergence of capabilities** to overcome an adversary’s strengths. This means having a **common operating picture** across all domains which forms the basis of any decision.

It is the **best positioned and capable operator** of any service using its capabilities across any domain. Thus, an Army coastal missile battery could be tasked to strike an enemy naval vessel detected by the radar of an Air Force aircraft.

#### **What are the requirements for MDO?**

It requires the **technical complexity** and the **command, control and communication (C3) structure**.

It would have inputs from all sensors for **optimum engagement solution** using artificial intelligence.

This demands three things. **First**, all sensors must be capable of being hosted on the **MDO architecture**.

**Second**, all executors must be able to receive inputs and instructions from the **C3 structure** and carry them out.

**Third**, if the link to the main structure is not available, the distributed control of mission command should ensure that operations continue.

#### **Should India embrace the concept of MDO?**

This is a complicated process. It requires **pioneering technologies**. Only nations with a developed **scientific base and financial standing** can afford it. It would require a complete relook at doctrine, planning, acquisition, staffing and training.

But, China is attempting to match U.S. military power. It has technologies and finances for Multi Domain Operations. India should acquire this **capability** for deterring China

**Russia-Ukraine conflict** has shown the utility of MDO. The West is helping Ukrainians to utilise the power of MDO to strike Russian targets.

#### **What is the way forward to embrace the concept of MDO?**

A **four-pronged strategy** is suggested. First, in the short-term, **traditional physical domains** must be stabilised. The **critical deficiencies** of the services should be plugged.

**Second, Command, Control and Communication networks** need to be protected against cyber threats. They need to be **linked and synchronised** so that **seamless exchange** of data is ensured.

**Third**, for the long term, a pilot project must be started now so that challenges in the creation of an **MDO environment** can be understood. The pilot project would identify the **technologies and financial requirements**.

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Finally, it is vital to **train and educate** personnel starting now. There is a need to inculcate **critical thinking and problem solving skills** at the operational level of war amongst **Joint All Domain Specialists**.

### 14. [Restrictions on NGO activities: Beyond civil society – ‘Protectionism’ in social services is impractical](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Beyond civil society – ‘Protectionism’ in social services is impractical**” published in the **Business Standard** on **4th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – The role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

**Relevance:** About restrictions on NGO activities.

**News:** Recently, at least two NGOs have received letters from the government to stop their fund-raising. The government also directed states to restrict NGO activities in areas where the Central government assumes primary responsibility.

What are the recent restrictions on NGO activities?

According to the home ministry, 6,677 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) lost their licences to access foreign funding between 2017 and 2021. The government is also restricting access to domestic funding as well.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development’s letter to the states complains about the “false information being spread by NGOs” and asks local administrations to raise awareness about the government’s nutrition schemes.

Why imposing restrictions on NGO activities is not correct?

**These strictures are unclear and counter-productive:** For instance, serial internal surveys, including the government’s National Family Health Surveys, have flagged child malnourishment as a serious issue. So, it is in the government’s interest to work with reputed NGOs towards improving child nourishment.

**Overlapping domains are unavoidable:** The government, by its very nature, is active in the delivery of social services such as health and education. So, the operation of NGOs always overlaps with government domains.

**Impacts CSR activities:** Improving education and tribal welfare is part of the list of activities under corporate social responsibility mandates. Restrictions on NGOs might create confusion about the status of corporate programmes in which they have invested money.

**Read more:** [The evolving role of CSR in funding NGOs](#)

What should be done instead of imposing restrictions on NGO activities?

**Lessons from Bangladesh:** Bangladesh is significantly improving its human development indicators in cooperation with NGOs. So, India should co-work with NGOs.

So, enforcing protectionism in social services in a country like India cannot be considered a sound policy.

### 15. [The values of local self-governance](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article “**The values of local self-governance**” published in **The Hindu** on **5th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Devolution of powers and finances up to local level and challenges therein

**Relevance–** Issues related to panchayat and municipalities.

**News–** The article explains the working of local self-governance in India. It also explains the normative basis of local self-governance.

**What is the normative basis of local self-governance?**

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Local self-governance is linked to the idea of **subsidiarity**. It is based on two broad arguments. First, it provides for **efficient provision of public goods**. Governments with smaller jurisdictions can provide services as per the preferences of their residents.

Second, it promotes **deeper democracy**. Governments that are closer to the people allow citizens to engage with public affairs more easily.

India's decentralisation agenda is also driven by these values. The **73rd and 74th amendments** require States to give powers to local bodies to enable them to function as **institutions of self-government**.

These amendments also provide for the **regular conduct of local elections, reservation of seats** for backward sections. They also institute **participative forums** like gram sabhas in panchayats and ward committees in municipal corporations.

### **What are the issues with local governments in India?**

Despite the constitutional mandate, local governments operate with **limited autonomy and authority**. It may be attributed to the **inherent limitations** of the 74th amendment.

There is failure on parts of State governments and courts to implement and interpret the amendment in **letter and spirit**. States have been provided with discretion regarding devolution of powers and levying of local taxes.

State governments are reluctant to implement the **74th amendment**. Cities are **economic powerhouses** and controlling urban land is important for financing State governments and political parties.

### **How recent order of Patna High Court is pathbreaking?**

It declared some provisions of the **Bihar Municipal (Amendment) Act, 2021** as **unconstitutional**.

The 2021 amendment had transferred the **powers of appointment** of Grade C and D employees from the of the municipality to the State government. The court held that these provisions violate the **74th Amendment**.

### **How can the local governments and federalism be strengthened?**

As **centralising tendencies** are increasing in India, there's also been a renewed assertion of federalism. However, this assertion of State rights is hardly articulated as **value-based normative claims**.

Hence, debates on **federalism** should include larger discussions on how power should be divided and shared between governments at the Union, State, and local level.

### 16. Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission: Making healthcare accessible, the digital way

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission: Making healthcare accessible, the digital way”** published in **The Indian Express** on **5th January 2023**.

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

**Relevance**– Use of digital technology for healthcare sector

**News**– The article explains the use of digital technology by the government for improving the healthcare services. It explains the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

### **How India has leveraged digital technology for provisioning of public goods?**

India has demonstrated its digital prowess by building **digital public goods** like Aadhaar, the Unified Payments Interface.

India leveraged **information and communications technologies** during the pandemic. Digital health solutions played a crucial role in bridging the gap in healthcare delivery. Health systems moved online to accommodate contactless care.

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Some examples of Digital Public Goods developed during the pandemic include the **CoWIN and the Aarogya Setu application**. CoWIN enabled the **digitalisation** of the vaccination process. Aarogya Setu provided **real-time data** on active cases and containment zones.

**Telemedicine platforms** saw a steep increase in user acquisitions. 85% of physicians used **teleconsultations** during the pandemic.

### **What is Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and its components?**

The PM launched this mission in September 2021, under the aegis of the **National Health Authority**. It has established a robust framework to provide **accessible, affordable, and equitable** healthcare through **digital highways**.

The ABDM has implemented vital building blocks to unite all **stakeholders** in the digital healthcare ecosystem. The **Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA)** creates a **standard identifier** for patients across healthcare providers.

By using **ABHA** and its associated **Personal Health Record app**, citizens can link, store, and share their health records to access healthcare services with **autonomy and consent**.

The **Health Facility Registry and the Health Professional Registries** provide **verified digital identities** to public and private health facilities and professionals. This enables them to connect to a central digital ecosystem. HFR and HPR help health professionals build an **online presence** and offer services more effectively.

The **Drug Registry** is designed to create a **single, up-to-date, centralised repository** of all approved drugs across all systems of medicine.

### **What are other digital initiatives planned by the government for the healthcare sector?**

The **Unified Health Interface** is another Digital Public Good being launched by the government. It enables all healthcare service providers and end-user applications to interact with each other on its network.

To give UHI the necessary push, the government is repurposing **Aarogya Setu and CoWIN**. Aarogya Setu is being transformed into a **general health and wellness application**.

CoWIN will be plugged with a lite **Hospital Management Information System (HMIS)** for small clinics. The purpose is to bring **digitisation** to the masses.

The government is also introducing **Heal by India**. It will make India's healthcare professionals' services available worldwide.

A platform is being developed to automate the allocation of deceased organ and tissue donations. It will make the process **faster and more transparent**.

**Health Claim Exchange platform** will automate the insurance claim settlement process.

### 17. [Jallikattu: cultural practice or cruelty?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Jallikattu: cultural practice or cruelty?**" published in **The Hindu** on **5<sup>th</sup> January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance

**Relevance:** issues associated with Jallikattu

**News:** Petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court to strike down a 2017 Tamil Nadu law that protects Jallikattu. SC will give the verdict in a few days.

#### **What is the issue?**

SC imposed ban on Jallikattu through a judgment (*Animal Welfare Board of India vs A. Nagaraja*) in May 2014.

However, in January 2017, people demanded the Central and State governments to come up with a law that would annul the Supreme Court's ban and allow jallikattu.

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This led to the enactment of the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Ordinance 2017**. It was later replaced by a bill adopted by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. However, some people moved against this law to SC and this issue was referred to a Constitution Bench.

### How is the SC examining the case?

The court is examining the case from various perspective.

1. whether jallikattu should be granted constitutional protection as a collective cultural right under **Article 29 (1)** which protects the educational and cultural rights of citizens.
2. Whether the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act of 2017** and the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Conduct of Jallikattu) Rules of 2017** promote cruelty to animals or ensure the survival and well-being of the native breed of bulls.
3. Whether jallikattu and bullock-cart race laws of Karnataka and Maharashtra would serve the objective of prevention of cruelty to animals under the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960**.

Moreover, SC in 2014 struck down the Tamil Nadu Regulation of Jallikattu Act, 2009, which had allowed jallikattu because the bulls were tortured to the hilt in the process of performing for the event.

SC at that time relied on **Article 48 of the Constitution** which urged the state to endeavour to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines to check the validity of the law.

### What were the arguments presented for and against Jallikattu?

**For – a)** jallikattu is both a religious and cultural event celebrated by the people of the State and its influence extends beyond the caste and creed, **b)** it is centuries-old and symbolic of a community's identity which **can be regulated and reformed** rather than completely banning, **c)** any **ban on such a practice** would be viewed as **hostile to culture** and against the sensitivities of the community, **d)** it is a tool for conserving this precious indigenous breed of livestock and **does not violate principles of compassion and humanity**, **e)** children are also being taught in school about the significance of the culture to preserve it beyond generations.

**Against – a)** Liberty is necessary for every living being, an aspect that had been recognised by the Constitution, **b)** there are deaths and injuries caused to humans as well as bulls in the event, **c) animals face extreme cruelty** and there is **no evidence to justify jallikattu as a part of culture**.

### 18. [Delhi road accident once again shows how public spaces are hostile to women](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Delhi road accident once again shows how public spaces are hostile to women**” published in **The Indian Express** on **5<sup>th</sup> January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS-2/3 – Women Issues/Infrastructure

**Relevance:** concerns associated with women's safety and road accident

**News:** The death of a girl in Delhi has highlighted the concerns over women safety and increasing road accidents.

### What are the concerns with road safety in India?

According to **NCRB data from 2021**, driving under the influence of drugs/alcohol contributed to **1.9 percent of deaths from accidents**. Around **90 percent of deaths on the road** were due to speeding, overtaking, and dangerous driving.

According to the **World Bank's data from 2019**, **India ranked first** among the top 20 countries for road accidents.

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### What are the concerns with women?

Women fear sexual assaults in public places. According to **researchers from the UN and ICRW** confirms that women face multiple forms of violence and sexual harassment in cities.

This affects women's choices and abilities to access opportunities which ultimately leads to low workforce participation by women.

Further, women going to work fear violence and it further increases due to the **lack of women focused public transport**.

Transport planning generally focuses on male travel patterns during peak hours of work. However, the **World Bank's report on women's mobility** in India has shown that women's travel patterns can often be different due to their caregiving roles.

The report provides that **84 percent of women's trips** were by public transport, and **45.4 percent of women tend to walk** to work compared to 27.4 percent of men.

This difference in travel pattern by women and lack of proper women's safety mechanism increases chances of violence and safety concerns.

### What can be the course of action?

India has the highest rate of fatality in road accidents in the world and a high rate of violence against women in public places.

Therefore, it should **a)** design streets for safe pedestrian movement, **b) streets should be well lit** with good pavements and the presence of street vendors, shops, and cafes with surveillance are necessary for women to feel safe, **c)** infrastructure should be provided for cycling and public transport should be made accessible and affordable.

### [19. How Free Now? – SC did well to warn against further restrictions on free speech. But misuse of IPC provisions needs checking too](#)

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

**“Why the Supreme Court is right to not curb ministers' free speech”** published in the **Indian Express** on **5th January 2023**.

**“How Free Now? – SC did well to warn against further restrictions on free speech. But misuse of IPC provisions needs checking too”** published in the **The Times of India** on **5th January 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the SC ruling on Fundamental Rights.

**News:** Recently, the Supreme Court has ruled that Articles 19(1) (free speech) and 21 (right to life and personal liberty) can be enforced against private entities also and the state is bound to protect these rights, even when they are infringed by non-state actors.

What are the salient points in the recent SC ruling on Fundamental Rights?

-No more reasonable restrictions can be envisaged other than the eight existing ones for the fundamental rights in Article 19(2). These are sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation, and incitement to an offence.

-Individual statements of ministers were inadequate to invoke the collective responsibility of the cabinet. Like other citizens, Ministers are also guaranteed the right to freedom of expression under Article 19(1) (a), governed by the reasonable restrictions laid out in Article 19(2).

-The violation of constitutional rights and invoking constitutional tort for securing damages happens only when the Minister's statement results in harm or losses to the complainant.



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The court held that “the role of the court is to protect fundamental rights limited by lawful restrictions and not to protect restrictions and make the rights residual privileges.”

What are the implications of the SC ruling on Fundamental Rights?

-If the state brings a new law curbing free speech on grounds of public interest that cannot be located within eight “reasonable restrictions” can be struck down.

-Many ordinary citizens find their ways of life, privacy, choices and liberties constrained by dominant groups. Now, the court reminded the state to proceed against those vigilantes.

What should be done to improve free speech?

The judicial pronouncements are **not able to fix the misuse of IPC provisions** drawing their constitutionality from Article 19(2)'s reasonable restrictions. Further, the problem of hate speech is also not clearly addressed.

For hate speech, the will of governments and political c

### 20. [Stabilising ties with Nepal in uncertain times](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Stabilising ties with Nepal in uncertain times**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th January 2023**.

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

**Relevance**– India and Nepal bilateral relations

**News**– The article explains the significance of recent election results for bilateral relations. It also explains the China factor in relationships and suggests the steps needed for improving ties.

**What is the significance of election results in Nepal for bilateral relations?**

Prachanda has become the Prime Minister. He decided to revive his earlier alliance with former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, who heads the CPN.

On the positive side, it includes the **peaceful mainstreaming** of the Maoist movement into the **democratic structure**, and the **integration** of guerrillas into the Nepal Army. The peaceful transfer of power, the adoption of a Constitution and the emergence of a **federal structure** are another political developments

On the negative side, the hung Parliament may lead to instability. This could translate into an inability to deal with the many daunting challenges confronting the country.

The continuing **unpredictability** in the India-Nepal cooperation due to frequent changes of government is another cause of concern.

**Why should India not overemphasise the China factor?**

India is used to dealing with **political instability** in Nepal and **anti-India or pro-China** leaders heading governments. Its focus for many years has been on **non-partisan support for inclusive economic development, interdependence, communication links, and people-to-people contacts**.

The extent of its linkages of history, geography, culture, religion, and economy with Nepal facilitate management of its **security concerns** within tolerable limits.

Moreover, leaders like Prachanda and Mr. Oli are seasoned veterans capable of making judgments in their **long-term political interests**. They talk about the new government adopting a policy of “**equi-proximity**” with India and China.

It is evident even in **robust democracies** that **ideological consistency** has less meaning in the politician's search for power. Labels such as ‘**pro-India**’ or ‘**anti-India**’ should not be taken very seriously. Even, ultranationalist leaders such as Mr. Oli and Prachanda have sometimes questioned the senseless opposition to India.

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Public opinion in Nepal is now **sensitive** to Chinese intentions, the risks of falling into a **debt trap**, and the limitations in terms of Chinese capacities in comparison to India's. China's image has deteriorated because of COVID-19.

**What is the way forward for the Indo-Nepal relationship?**

India, however, cannot be **complacent**. Traditional irritants such as the 1950 **India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship and the border issue** should be resolved in an **open and transparent manner**.

**Worldview of the East India Company or British India** should not determine the policies. Nepal is a transforming country. India is a player on the **global stage**. The world itself is heading towards major transformations, changing priorities and boundless possibilities.

The COVID-19 crisis is one of the largest shocks to the **global socioeconomic framework**. It is the time for fresh thinking on issues like **economic recovery; bilateral, sub-regional and regional cooperation; restructuring supply chains**.

Other issues that need attention are **security; energy cooperation; development; people-to-people contacts and soft power** to maximise mutual advantage.

**Empathy** is an urgent necessity for sustainable friendly ties. It is the will of stakeholders from each side to understand each other's concerns.

There is a need for a **diverse but balanced and constructive approach** to India-Nepal relations.

### 21. [Free speech in India: How Free Speech Is Little Freer](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**How Free Speech Is Little Freer**" published in **The Times of India** on **6th January 2023**. **Syllabus:** GS 2 – Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

**Relevance:** About the SC ruling on free speech in India.

**News:** Recently, the Supreme Court has ruled that **Articles 19(1)** (free speech) and 21 (right to life and personal liberty) can be enforced against private entities also.

What are the salient points in the recent SC ruling on Free speech?

**Read here:** [Supreme Court expands Article 19 ambit](#)

What are the implications of the SC ruling on Free speech?

**Read here:** [How Free Now? – SC did well to warn against further restrictions on free speech. But misuse of IPC provisions needs checking too](#)

About Article 19 of the Indian Constitution

**Read here:** [Article 19 of Indian Constitution](#)

In short, Article 19(1)(a) gives citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression. Article 19(2) enlists certain grounds on the basis of which the state, through a law, can impose reasonable restrictions on this right.

If the restrictions imposed by a law are not 'reasonable', SC or a high court may strike down the law.

**In Shreya Singhal case:** The SC struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000 for imposing an unreasonable restriction on free speech. On the other hand, the court held that Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (which criminalises sedition) imposes a reasonable restriction on free speech.

What is the constitutional history of free speech in India?

The framer of the constitution gave a right to free speech which could be restricted on explicitly stated grounds. Such as libel, slander, defamation, contempt of court, decency or morality, and anything which undermines the security of or tends to overthrow the state.

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In 1950, the government banned and pre censored two weeklies respectively in the interests of public order. But the court overruled it as public order was not one of the enlisted restrictions. Hence, the government **amended Article 19(2)** and introduced a host of additional grounds (including public order) to restrict free speech. More grounds were subsequently added.

How has the right to free speech in India developed since then?

The scope of the right to free speech has been incrementally expanded and the restrictions have been more clearly defined. For instance,

-SC has read the **freedom of the press into Article 19(1) (a)**. This includes the right to freely publish and circulate information, opinions, as well as advertisements.

-SC recognised the **right to know as a part of free speech** by holding that voters are entitled to receive information about the criminal antecedents of candidates.

-The courts have held the **significance of free speech in artistic expression** also. For example, **a)** In 2008, the Delhi HC found that a painting by MF Husain depicting Bharat Mata did not attract any of the restrictions enlisted under Article 19(2). The court emphasised the need to strike a balance between obscenity and creativity, **b)** In 2018, SC held that state governments could not impose prior restraints on the exhibition of Padmaavat after the CBFC had certified it.

What is the observation of Free speech in India?

Overall, the right to free speech can only be curtailed on the basis of the enlisted grounds, and no others. The judiciary is the ultimate custodian of everyone's free speech, irrespective of whether they are a minister or ordinary citizens.

### 22. The judicial pendency question: How to lighten the court's load

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**The judicial pendency question: How to lighten the court's load**" published in **The Indian Express** on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance

**Relevance:** high number of pending cases in the court

**News:** Indian courts have a high number of pending cases and out of these cases the government is the largest litigant in the court system.

**What are the findings of the various reports?**

**Department of Justice:** It released an **Action Plan** to reduce Government Litigation in 2017. This action plan was in response to the fact that **46 percent** of the total pending cases in the court system is related to the government.

**Legal Information Management Briefing System (LIMBS) Project:** It was started in 2015 to connect 55 ministries and their departments for litigation management. It shows that there are 6,20,000 cases involving the government pending before the court system.

**Law Commission of India:** The **230th report of Law Commission** noted that the government is the biggest litigant in the system.

**National Litigation Policy, 2010:** The **status note on NLP 2010**, was prepared based on the recognition that the government and its various agencies are the predominant litigants in the courts and tribunals in the country.

**NLP aimed** to transform the government into an efficient and responsible litigant. However, in response to a PIL inquiring about the NLP 2015, the government replied to the Delhi High Court that it was still under consideration.

Moreover, not all its litigation is initiated by the government but the government acts as the catalyst in inter-departmental litigation. Citizens also file writ petitions that involve the government.

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Therefore, the government can control some of the litigation it is involved in, but not those that involve the government acting as the catalyst.

### **How can the government control the litigations?**

The government's 2010 National Litigation Policy (NLP) recognizes that service matters should not be normally appealed. Cases that involve questions of constitutional interpretation should only be taken to the Supreme Court.

The government should implement reforms suggested by its policymakers because the **costs involved in pursuing litigation eat public funds**.

Hence, the court system should be used more efficiently and cautiously and more judges should be appointed for speedy hearing of the cases.

### 23. [Political parties are not like companies](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Political parties are not like companies**" published in **The Hindu** on **7<sup>th</sup> January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance

**Relevance:** reforms required in political parties

**News:** Political parties have started being compared like corporations these days which is misleading and is not a feature of politics.

### **How are political parties different from corporations?**

**Political Parties:** Political parties have **claimants and volunteers while a company has employees**. The purpose of a political party is to capture state power through raising social agendas. A party is itself seen as the part of the society which has **individuals as volunteers rather than paid employees** like companies.

Multiple claimants for every position often affect the party's operations. Due to the public nature of political parties, it is not possible to exclude claimants from participation in the organisation's functioning.

Further, internal conflicts of interest have a direct bearing on a party's ability to perform, especially in a competitive electoral landscape.

**For example**, contradictory statements made by party functionaries during important campaigns has a cascading effect on all aspects of the party's operations from outreach to fundraising.

So, it is not easy for a political party to **fire any political functionaries like the companies** because political functionaries don't just perform a role but also serve as representatives of some or other interests.

In a political party, **power is more informal and dynamic than in a corporation**. Therefore, **elements of a corporation such as hierarchy, discipline and accountability do not fit within a political party**.

**Corporations:** Most private companies **operate in a narrowly defined and apolitical space** selling goods and services. Politics that deals with societal aspects is not part of the companies. Some sort of political judgment in the functioning of the corporation is exercised at the top level rather than employees.

A corporation is **staffed by paid employees** performing well-defined, non-overlapping roles with required professional skills for their works.

However, recent trends show that political parties are now being taken towards corporatization and professionalization.

### **What is the recent trend?**

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Political parties have now started to **give political judgment from various positions** which are different from the actual decision-making authority.

**Chief Ministers are using the bureaucracy** to bypass Ministers and **political consultants** to bypass the party organization. These are examples of **professionalization of political parties**. However, instead of improving efficiency, this has resulted in **further degradation of overall public purpose**.

Further, the **reduction in political discretion from individuals** has made them act like employees and less capable of negotiating the party's internal power structures. This reduces the **overall credibility of the political space**.

Therefore, competence and accountability from political functionaries should be sought but not through the corporatization of political parties.

### 24. [Strategic space & diffidence](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“Strategic space & diffidence”** published in the **Business Standard** on **7th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**Relevance**– External challenges and its management by Indian strategic establishment

**News**– The article explains the external security environment of India. It also explains India strategic outlook on issues impacting its national interest

**What are different scenarios around external security environment of India?**

**First scenario**– There is **relative stability** on the border with China. Pakistan is facing **internal challenges**.

**India's alliances** with the west and the east are becoming more durable. They are bound by the glue of the common threat of China.

**Second scenario**– The Chinese are **consolidating** their position and the Modi government has failed to deter them **militarily or diplomatically**.

Pakistan will get over its **internal issues** eventually and get back to its usual business. China and Pakistan continue to be **close allies**.

**Chinese aggression** has compelled India to move its firepower to the northern front. It will provide comfort to Pakistan on western front.

India's **Western allies** will remain much too invested in Ukraine.

**Third scenario**– Both countries are now fully deployed and any **quick, low-cost military gains** are not possible. Fresh border disputes will bring **bad reputation** to aggressor internationally.

But things could change dramatically if there is a resolution of Ukraine war. Then China can return to **bullying behaviour**.

Biggest limitation of Pakistan is its **weak economy**. After Sri Lanka, Pakistan's is the most **bankrupt economy** in the region. It has to manage a large army, maintain internal stability amid rising inflation and joblessness, manage an **adversarial relationship** with a growing India.

**Economic frustrations** will fuel support for a **populist leader** like Imran.

This scenario shows that **strategic situation** around India has neither improved nor worsened. It's gone into a rare **long and useful stalemate**.

The situation of stability will end sooner rather than later. While this affords India some rare strategic breathing time, we should not waste it.

This is the time to look to the future, accelerate the changes, and **fast-forward the reforms**.

**What has been change in strategic outlook of India after Modi government coming to power?**

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Since 2014, the Modi government has instituted a significant change in its **strategic position**. India is no longer hesitate about being seen in **alliances**.

India **old sensitivities** still remain. India is the only **Quad member** unwilling to talk about the grouping's **military dimension**. The equation with Russia is being managed **sensitively**.

Most of **Indo-pacific allies** have clearly stated, public, **national security strategies**. They also have **Indo-Pacific strategies**. India is only power with no stated **national or Indo-Pacific strategy**.

India is not able to craft a **national strategic policy** because of its location and live land borders. It's also a challenge to find the resources to raise India's **maritime power**.

### 25. [The crisis in international law](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The crisis in international law**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th January 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- International relations

**Relevance**– Impacts of emerging world order

**News**– The article explains the challenges created by emerging global order and rising populism for international law

**What has been the shape of global order after the 2nd world war?**

After the second world war, the **world order was bipolar**. There was **great power competition** between a ‘**capitalist**’ **America** and a ‘**communist**’ **Soviet Union**.

The end of the Cold War led to the **disintegration of the Soviet Union** and the **collapse of communism**. This ‘**unipolar**’ **moment** promoted **multilateralism** and led to “**relative harmony**” among the major powers for almost three decades.

However, during this period, NATO bombed Kosovo and the Western forces invaded Iraq in complete disregard to the UN Charter.

This phase saw the spread of **democracy**, greater acceptance of **universal human rights**, and a **global consensus** for maintaining **international rule of law**.

**How has the changing global order in recent times impacted international law?**

We have entered a **multipolar world**. These **universal values** are under threat. It involves the securitisation of international law. There is increasing rivalry between major powers. There is the decline of ‘**liberal**’ **West** and the rise of an ‘**autocratic**’ **China** and ‘**expansionist**’ **Russia**.

China is now flexing its muscles. It is **weaponizing international law**. China views law as an instrument in the service of the state. This is diametrically opposed to the **rule of law theory** in **liberal democracies** where the law's function is to constrain uncontrolled state power.

Under the Chinese and Russian versions, the **territorial integrity** of nations and the **sovereignty** of states doesn't quite matter.

The **Russian approach** towards international law believes that the basis of international law is not universal but **cultural and civilisational distinctness**. It distinguishes between countries that are truly sovereign and countries that possess **nominal or limited sovereignty**, such as Ukraine.

The **geo-economic order** has been impacted by **economic protectionism**. The U.S. is desperate to ensure its continued **hegemony**. It is backtracking on the **neoliberal consensus of interdependence** and **non-discrimination in international economic law**.

The U.S. has rejected the recent WTO panel reports that held the U.S.'s **protectionist industrial policies** masquerading as **national security objectives** illegal.

The U.S. has also weakened the WTO's effective **dispute settlement mechanism** by continuously blocking the appointment of the **Appellate Body** members.

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### How the rise of populism is impacting international law?

2023 will continue to face challenges from **populist and ethno-nationalist regimes** in several countries such as Hungary, Turkey, Poland, and Israel. Populists' leaders attack the **legitimacy of international law**. They refer to it as **foreign law**, which is inimical to their national interests. It is often reduced to a mere **law of coordination**.

Populists also attack international institutions and international courts for preventing them from pursuing the **interests of the 'pure' people** they claim to represent. They enact domestic laws to protect the **ethnic identity of the 'pure' people** even if these laws undermine international.

# General

# Studies

# Paper – 3



### General Studies - 3

#### 1. [The danger of deepfakes](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The danger of deepfakes**” published in **The Hindu** on **2<sup>nd</sup> January 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** concerns associated with deepfake technology.

**News:** **The article discusses the problems associated with deepfake technology and measures needed to tackle those.**

#### **What are deepfakes?**

They are digital media-video, audio, and images edited and manipulated using Artificial Intelligence.

Cloud computing, public research AI algorithms, abundant data and availability of vast media have provided the option to manipulate the media. This **synthetic media content** is referred to as deepfakes.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Generated Synthetic media or deepfakes have benefits in certain areas such as accessibility, education, film production, criminal forensics, and artistic expression.

However, there are more problems associated with it than its benefits.

#### **What are the problems with deepfakes?**

**Targeting Women:** According to a report, **96% of deepfakes** are pornographic videos. Deepfake pornography exclusively **targets women**. It reduces women to sexual objects causing emotional distress, financial loss and consequences like job loss.

**Social harm:** Deepfakes can also cause **short-term and long-term social harm**. For example, it can depict a person as indulging in antisocial behaviors and saying bad things that he never did.

**Misuse by a nation-state:** Deepfake could be used by a nation to **harm public safety** and **create uncertainty and chaos in the target country**. Deepfakes can undermine trust in institutions and diplomacy.

**Misuse by non-state actors:** Deepfakes can be used by non-state actors, such as **insurgent groups and terrorist organisations**, to show their provoking speeches or such actions to create anti-state sentiments among people.

**Spread of unauthentic information:** Deepfakes can be used to spread fake news, fake information. Thus, misleading the people.

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

1. **a)** There is a need to **enhance media literacy** amongst the people. It is the most effective tool to combat disinformation and deepfakes, **b)** A **collaborative discussion with** the technology industry, civil society, and policymakers is needed to create a proper law, **c)** there is a need for **easy-to-use and accessible technology** solutions to detect deepfakes, **d)** **people should act responsibly** and think before sharing any media and before coming to any conclusion.

#### 2. [The International Year of Millets: how India's govt can promote the cereals in 2023](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The International Year of Millets: how India's govt can promote the cereals in 2023**” published in **The Indian Express** on **2<sup>nd</sup> January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Food Security

**Relevance:** benefits and challenges associated millets

**News:** The effort of India has led the United Nations to declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets. India also accounts for a fifth of the world's millets production.

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### What are the benefits of millets?

Millets are **more nutritious than rice and wheat**. However, their protein quality is poorer than that of rice.

The rotis from bajra makes one **feel fuller for longer** as they take more time to digest and **do not raise blood sugar levels too fast**. However, there are also challenges associated with millets.

**Read More:** [Millet Production in India – Explained](#)

### What are the challenges with millets?

**Unassured irrigation:** Farmers get assured irrigation for rice, wheat, sugarcane, or cotton. Therefore, they would switch towards these crops.

**Lack of MSP:** Pusa – 1201, a hybrid bajra has been developed to raise the yields and withstand fungal diseases. However, the absence of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) by the government would make farmers hesitant to grow this variety.

**Read More:** [Millet Production in India – Explained](#)

### What steps can be taken by the government to promote millet?

**First**, the two schemes of the government – **Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman and Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0** can be leveraged making them more millets-focused.

**Second**, MSP procurement of millets should be part of a decentralized nutritional programme.

**Third**, millets could be served in the form of **ready-to-eat foods**.

**Fourth**, the **Centre could fund states** willing to procure millets, specific to their region and exclusively for distribution through schools and anganwadis.

**Read More:** [Millet Production in India](#)

### 3. [The path to decarbonisation in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“The path to decarbonisation in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict”** published in **The Indian Express** on **2nd January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

**Relevance**– Issues related to energy markets

**News**– The article explains the major changes happening in international energy markets. It also explains the future strategy for the Indian energy market in the changing dynamics.

Energy market is **fragmented** and **energy nationalism** is the driving force behind policy.

The **Iron curtain** has come down. Russia will not be allowed access to western markets as long as Putin is holding the Presidency in Russia. It will lead to a tightening energy embrace between Russia and China.

OPEC plus one has stepped out of western influence. It is actually increasing the closeness between Russia and Saudi Arabia on energy matters. Saudi Arabia has made it clear that it wants to pursue a **“Saudi first” non-aligned approach** to international relations.

**New centers of energy powers** are emerging around the world that have a large share of metals, minerals required for clean energy. China is currently the dominant power.

### What is the way forward for India?

**Petroleum sector**– Russian crude is not a **sustainable option** to meet the energy requirements for India. Government must **increase the productivity** of existing producing fields. There is a need to increase the country’s **market potential** to secure a long-term supply with Saudi Arabia and equity partnership with Iran.

**Strategic petroleum reserves** should be enhanced to cover at least 30 days of consumption. The construction of the **pan-India national gas pipeline** grid should be expedited.

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**Coal sector**– Coal will remain an important component of **India’s energy system** for decades. Hundreds of people depend upon the coal ecosystem for livelihood. The government has to find an **energy transition route** that balances livelihoods and a green agenda.

Some steps in that direction are increased **R&D expenditure for coal gasification and carbon capture technologies; carbon tax**; establishment of **regulatory and monitoring mechanisms** for measuring carbon emissions from industry and closure of **inefficient and old plants**. NITI Aayog should determine the competitiveness of coal versus solar on a full-cost basis.

**Demand side measures**– The **demand conservation and efficiency side** is equally important. It is the cheapest, easiest and quickest way to reduce dependence on external sources.

**Other measures**– There is need for upgradation of **transmission grid network** to make it resilient for clean energy. The **structural issues** impacting the renewable sector should be addressed. The improvement in balance sheets of state distribution companies; easing the process for acquisition of land and removal of **regulatory uncertainties** are important.

**Mineral and chip diplomacy** is needed to diversify the source of supply of minerals for clean energy.

Creation of an **enabling ecosystem** for developing and commercializing **third-generation clean energy technologies** like hydrogen, biofuels and modular nuclear reactors should be pushed.

#### 4. [Demand to exploration: Key warning signals for India’s gas industry in 2023](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Demand to exploration: Key warning signals for India’s gas industry in 2023**” published in the **Business Standard** on **2nd January 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About gas-based economy in India.

**News:** Indian natural gas business is key to the country achieving its net-zero targets in 2070. Why does India need to focus on gas based economy?

-Unlike oil, where India has a cheap supply source in Russia, and other affordable sources in West Asia, there is no one to supply liquefied fuel to India at rates that consumers can afford.

-India’s fertiliser and domestic city gas businesses are heavily dependent on natural gas supplies.

-India’s 2070 net-zero climate change target is contingent on increasing gas as a fuel in the economy.

**Read more:** [The Russia-Ukraine war has put the spotlight on the role of Liquefied Natural Gas \(LNG\) in the global energy futures.](#)

What are the key warning signals for India’s gas industry in 2023?

**Reduction in demand:** Demand for gas in India declined for the first time in eight years this fiscal (excluding a Covid-19-induced dip in 2020-21) after rising steadily until 2019-20.

India’s gas demand was still below 2011-12 levels when India’s dependence on imported LNG was at around half of the current levels.

**Decline in gas prices:** Russian state-run Gazprom’s sales to Europe and Turkey were at their lowest this century. The squeeze on European supplies increased benchmark gas prices at Dutch TTF to a record in August equivalent to \$94 per mBtu (million British thermal units) LNG levels. But TTF month-ahead prices now average \$36 per mBtu, 5% below last year’s levels. This drastic decline in gas is due to mild weather and adequate inventories in Europe.

**Volatility in gas rates for India:** Europe will need around 75 million tonnes a year of LNG, equivalent to over three times what India consumes, to substitute 100 billion cubic metres of Russian gas this year.

But Qatar, the world’s biggest LNG producer, plans to increase output by only 33 million tonnes a year. This exposes countries like India to volatility in rates in the meantime.

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**Lack of storage facilities in India:** There are almost no gas storage facilities, unlike in China, the US and Europe because the government did not focus on this aspect of the gas supply chain. This makes India even more vulnerable to global price swings.

**Reduction in supply to India:** Gazprom abruptly ceased 2.5 million-tonne-a-year shipment under a 20-year contract with GAIL.

Over a third of India's annual LNG supplies comes from a single Qatari supply contract. This is set to expire in a few years. Now Indian importers must compete with Europe, which has the ability to pay steep premiums for term volumes.

**India lacks gas exploration:** India's potential gas reserves lie in deep waters. So, gas exploration in India is expensive and high-risk to drill.

The government might accept the recommendations of the Kirit Parikh committee. The committee recommended capping rates at 24% less than the \$8.57 per mBtu that explorer ONGC currently charges for supplies. India's latest price caps on domestic gas supplies will threaten and deter exploration.

**Read more:** [Bottlenecks slow progress of 'one nation one gas grid'](#)

What should be done to improve gas based economy in India?

The government must be nimble, creative, targeted and pragmatic in new global gas environment. For that, India must free fuel prices instead of meddling with them and regulators must implement the proposals in a faster manner.

### 5. ['Demonetisation arose from the Centre ...it should have enacted a law'](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article **"Demonetisation arose from the Centre ...it should have enacted a law"** published in **The Indian Express** on **3rd January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

**Relevance-** Issues related to banking and monetary policy

**News-** The article explains the issue of legality of demonetisation by the central government in 2016.

#### **What are the legal provisions for demonetisation initiated by RBI?**

According to **sub-section (1) of Section 26 of the RBI Act, 1934**, every bank note shall be legal tender at any place in India and shall be guaranteed by the central government. This provision is subject to **sub-section (2) of Section 26 of the Act**.

Sub-section (2) of Section 26 of the Act applies only when a proposal for demonetisation is initiated by the RBI. It should be a **recommendation** being made to the central government. The recommendation can be in respect of **any series of bank notes** of any denomination

The word **"any"** will mean a **specified series or a particular series** of bank notes. Similarly, **"any" denomination** will mean any **particular or specified denomination** of bank notes.

If the word "any" is interpreted to mean **"all series of bank notes" of "all denominations"**, it would give the central board of the bank unguided and unlimited powers. It would be **arbitrary and unconstitutional**.

On receiving the said recommendation made by the central board of the bank under **sub-section (2) of Section 26 of the Act**, the central government may accept or reject the said recommendation.

If the central government accepts the recommendation, it may issue a **notification** in the Gazette of India. It should specify the date from which the bank notes shall cease to be legal tender.

#### **What are the legal provisions for demonetisation initiated by the central government?**

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The provisions of the Act do not bar the central government from initiating **demonetisation**. It could do so by using the powers under **Entry 36 of List I of the Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution. However, it has to be done only by an ordinance or legislation.

The central government cannot demonetise bank notes by issuance of a **gazette notification under sub-section (2) of Section 26 of the Act**.

When the central government proposes demonetisation of any bank note, it must seek the opinion of the central board of the bank. The bank is the sole authority to **regulate** circulation of bank notes and secure **monetary stability**.

The opinion of the central board of the bank should be **independent** after a **meaningful discussion** by the central board of the bank. If the central bank gives **negative opinion**, the central government may still go ahead with **demonetisation** after weighing the **pros and cons**.

**What are arguments against the legality of demonetisation initiated by the central government in 2016?**

The proposal for demonetisation in 2016 came from the central government. Therefore, it could not be given effect by way of a notification under **Section 26 of the Act**.

The decision making process did not include **independent advice** by the central board of the bank. The central bank acted on behalf of the central government.

Therefore, notification dated November 8, 2016 for demonetisation is **unlawful**.

### 6. [Being pragmatic about energy sources](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Being pragmatic about energy sources**” published in **Business Standard** on **3<sup>rd</sup> January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Environment**

**Relevance:** concerns associated with adoption of clean energy.

**News:** The Russia-Ukraine war has again made countries dependent on fossil fuels for energy generation which has impacted the adoption of clean energy.

**What is needed towards adoption of clean energy?**

There is a need for **proper storage technology** for renewables and without it solar and wind capacities will need gas-powered plants for energy generation.

There are announcements made about giga-storage factories that can power the world but we are still several years away from such energy storage technologies.

**What are the reasons behind delay in storage technology?**

**First**, laboratory experiments for bringing up storage technology that can power large numbers of homes, factories and offices require **time, capital and engineering expertise**.

**Second**, better battery capacities for storage requires an increase in the **mining activities and mineral supply**. **For example**, solar panels and wind turbines need minerals. Some varieties are easily available but there are many minerals that are relatively rare.

As per the expert, billions of tones of minerals will need to be mined over the next few decades to ensure that ambitious clean energy goals of developed countries are met.

However, the **problem with mining is that it is not clean**, causes ecological damage and requires a large amount of energy from thermal-fueled power plants.

**What are other concerns with the adoption of green hydrogen?**

**Green hydrogen** is produced by the process of electrolyzing water using renewable energy sources such as solar or wind power. It is considered among the cleanest of fuels.

However, green hydrogen **costs too much** to be a replacement for natural gas.

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Furthermore, there are **leakage problems** associated with hydrogen. Hydrogen is highly inflammable and requires special containers and pipes to transport safely. Still, some of the gas leaks into the atmosphere causing environmental damage.

Therefore, all energy sources have negatives and the government must keep this in mind that fossil fuel will be needed for the energy generations in the coming decades.

### 7. [It's time to consider a wealth tax that may lessen Indian inequality](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**It's time to consider a wealth tax that may lessen Indian inequality**” published in the **mint** on **3rd January 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

**Relevance**– Issues related to fiscal policy

**News**– The article explains the case of levying wealth tax in India .

#### **Why is there a need to introduce wealth tax in India?**

There has been massive **accumulation of wealth** in a few hands. It remains completely **untaxed** and unavailable for **public allocation**.

Wealth is largely dependent on **inheritance and opportunities**. It comes with the advantages associated with belonging to a **privileged class and caste**.

According to the World **Inequality Database of 2022**, India's top 10% population owns 65% of the country's wealth while, bottom 10% owns only 6%. An **Oxfam report** highlighted how India's richest doubled their wealth during the pandemic.

One argument in support of **wealth accumulation** is that it could lead to investment. But this is not true in the case of India. Government lowered **corporate tax** significantly from 30% to 22% in 2019-20. But, it has not generated much private investment.

Investment has not created **employment opportunities** for youth. The **unemployment rate** in the 15-24 age group during May-July 2022 was 28.3%. In post-covid recovery phase, economic growth has largely been **jobless**.

#### **What is wealth tax and its prevalence in India?**

Wealth tax is a **direct tax**. It can take several forms such as property tax, inheritance or gift tax and capital gains tax. **Capital gains tax** exists in India but applies only to **transactions**. Hence, it has a very **limited base**.

India scrapped its **estate duty** in 1985 and has no inheritance tax. The **receipt of gifts** is subjected to income tax but it is subjected to various exemptions.

At present, India does not have any **wealth tax** that is tax levied on an entire property.

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

India needs a shift in its **fiscal policy**. It needs to adopt measures that create **employment opportunities** and **drive demand** for products made by small and medium producers.

**Public investment** is needed to boost the **capabilities** of small players across various sectors like agriculture and manufacturing. It is also required for **essential public services** to enhance the capabilities of youth. One potential source of revenue to fund such investments is wealth tax

A number of **Latin American countries** have introduced **annual wealth tax** on wealth gains each year. This is the right time for the country to introduce a **progressive wealth tax** along with other fiscal steps that can reduce the growing inequalities.

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### 8. [Popularize the e-rupee even at the cost of UPI](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Popularize the e-rupee even at the cost of UPI**” published in the **Livemint** on **3rd January 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About the promoting e-rupee and concerns associated with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

**News:** Recently, the supreme court upheld the demonetization done by the government in 2016. The government plans to improve the rupee digitisation. But, India’s cash intensity remains roughly on the same incline as it was earlier.

About the success of Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

The UPI has been a spectacular success since its 2016 launch. It is designed for instant transfers between bank accounts done via mobile phones.

According to the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), UPI operator, UPI processed more than 74 billion transactions in 2022. This is up 90% over 2021. It is worth almost ₹126 trillion, a 76% leap from 2021.

With 381 banks in the loop, net-linked handsets everywhere and UPI adoption now so wide.

**Must read:** [UPI and Digital Payments in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the concerns associated with the UPI?

The government **levies no user fee for UPI transactions**. Public funds are used in strengthening UPI and funding bank transfers done by UPI. The government justifies that it’s a “digital public good with immense convenience for the public and productivity gains for the economy.”

Why India should promote RBI’s retail e-rupee instead of UPI?

This is because **a)** The digital rupee will **better serve the cause of economic stability** than an over-reliance on banks that square off transfers among themselves, **b)** With increasing UPI Payments, the public money spent for strengthening it will also increase. But this is not the case with the e-rupee, **c)** The mass usage of the e-rupee would involve the circulation of money that’s a direct liability of the central bank. On the other hand, UPI relies more on money in bank accounts.

**Must read:** [e-Rupee: Here’s a Quizexplained on India’s first official digital currency](#)

### 9. [Science Congress: an appraisal](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Science Congress: an appraisal**” published in **The Indian Express** on **4th January 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** issues associated with the ISC and measures needed to bring reforms.

**News:** The Indian Science Congress is conducting its 108th edition in Nagpur after a two-year gap due to the pandemic. The event was inaugurated by PM Modi.

**What are the excerpts of the PM’s speech?**

He highlighted harnessing scientific knowledge for societal needs and making India self-reliant. He said that scientific works should be such which will fulfill the needs of India and have effects on the entire humanity. Therefore, we should **work on such issues which are important for the entire humanity**.

He also mentioned other priority areas like disease control, management of natural disasters, space applications, waste management, new materials, and semiconductor research.

**What is the Indian Science Congress?**

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The **Indian Science Congress was started in 1914**. It brings together scientists and researchers from the premier institutions, laboratories, science teachers and professors from colleges and universities.

It offers a platform for their interaction with students and the general public on matters related to science.

It is organized by the Indian Science Congress Association (**ISCA**), an independent body functioning with the support of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in the central government.

However, the purpose of organizing the Indian Science Congress is not being served these days and there have **been lots of criticism** of it.

**What are the reasons behind the criticism and the decline of ISC?**

There has been a **lack of serious discussion, promotion of pseudoscience, weird claims by random speakers, and the absence of useful outcomes**.

Scientists, leading scientific institutions and laboratories and others have started to avoid the event.

The attendees from colleges and universities have **limited scientific knowledge** and papers presented by them hardly reflect the latest advancements in science.

Some scientists have asked for the discontinuation of the event or at least withdrawal of government support. There have been talks of reforms but nothing has happened.

**Why has the government not been successful in bringing reforms in ISC?**

The government provides an annual grant for organizing the ISC. Government agencies, like the Science and Education Research Board, also make financial contributions because the event is seen as an effort to promote science.

Further, the **government has no role to play in the selection of the panelists** or speakers, the papers to be presented, or the subjects to be discussed.

But due to the grants provided by the government and presence of the PM, the **event gets attached with the government and lands in a controversy**.

The government is then blamed for it and also have fear of being blamed as anti-science if reforms are brought.

**What can be done to bring reforms in the ISC?**

Scientists say that a better way to reform the Science Congress could be to develop an **alternative forum**.

Top Indian and global scientists could be invited in the forum to talk about the latest developments in the science. These kinds of forums are already being organised in many countries and are extremely popular.

The forum can also serve as platforms to spread scientific knowledge among youngsters, general public and help in developing scientific temper.

It could also help in making Indian science more competitive, and lead to an increase in collaborative research with leading scientific groups and institutions.



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### 10. [Preventing animal cruelty is a duty of the state](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Preventing animal cruelty is a duty of the state**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Conservation. GS2- Significant provisions of constitution

**News**– The article explains the issue of legality of jallikattu sport in Tamil Nadu. It also explains the issue of animal welfare.

A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India will deliver its verdict on the validity of Tamil Nadu’s law permitting the practice of jallikattu in the State.

In 2014, in ***Animal Welfare Board of India v. A. Nagaraja***, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court declared jallikattu illegitimate. Since then, Tamil Nadu has made efforts to resurrect the **sport’s legality**.

**What are the deficiencies in constitution and legislative structure for addressing the question of animal welfare?**

None of the **fundamental rights** contained in **Part III** of the Constitution are explicitly conferred on animals. **Article 14 and Article 21** are bestowed on persons.

Some of the **DPSPs and the Fundamental Duties** put **responsibility** on the state and on human beings to protect and improve the natural environment. But these are **unenforceable obligations**.

Legislation on animal welfare does not follow an **animal rights approach**. These are based on the **ethical belief** that **collective conscience** does not permit us to inflict unnecessary pain and suffering on animals. This approach was followed while enacting the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act**.

The **PCA Act** has shortcomings. While it **criminalises** several types of actions that cause cruelty to animals, it contains exemptions. For example, the use of animals for experiments with a view to securing medical advancement.

Tamil Nadu amended the **PCA Act** in 2017 on the basis that both the state and the Union government have the **power to legislate** on issues concerning **cruelty to animals**. It specifically excluded jallikattu from the confines of the statute’s various protections. It also secured the **President’s approval** for the law.

**What are the arguments by petitioners against jallikattu in the Supreme Court?**

**Judicial review** of legislation can broadly be made on two grounds. One, the **competence of the legislature** to enact the law. Second, the **violations of fundamental rights** contained in Part III of the Constitution.

Both the Union and the State legislatures have equal power to make laws on ‘**prevention of animal cruelty**’. But the law regulating jallikattu by the Tamil Nadu government gives consent to cruelty on animals. Hence, it must be seen as a **colourable exercise of power**.

The Supreme Court arrived at **clear findings of fact and law** in 2014. In **A. Nagaraja**, the court had held that jallikattu amounted to a violation of the existing provisions of the PCA Act, and the **fundamental duty** contained in **Article 51A(g)**.

The Bench said that it had a direct bearing on the **right to life** contained in **Article 21**. The expanded meaning of the word “life” now includes a right against **disturbance to the basic environment**.

**What should be the approach towards this issue?**

On any **reasonable reading** of the Constitution, it might be difficult to hold that animals are promised rights under **Article 21 and under Article 14**.

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The better approach to the dispute is to maintain a **greater faith in our Constitution's text and values**. It needs to be seen in the context of our own right to live in a world that treats animals with equal concern.

The judgement in **A. Nagaraja** hinted at this approach. It held that **Article 21** safeguards only the rights of human beings. But the word **"life"** today means something more than mere existence. It means an existence that allows us to live in a **clean and healthy environment**.

### 11. [The jobs & technology trade-off](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"The jobs & technology trade-off"** published in the **Business Standard** on **4th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Employment.

**Relevance:** About job-displacing technology.

**News:** The negative impact of technological progress on jobs is often ignored. With India's G20 presidency, India is expected to bring a human-centric approach to technology.

How has technological progress impacted the job market worldwide?

Since the 1990s in the US and Europe, labour has been continuously replaced by capital due to huge advances in technology, such as the internet and digital technology.

The pace of technology has accelerated, and the vast mass of workers cannot adjust to the new realities at that speed. **Labour-replacing technologies** are getting better and better every year. So, every country will face a job crisis in the near future.

On the other hand, technological improvements **reduce the need for skills at the bottom end of the job market**. For instance, deadbeat jobs will expand in sectors such as logistics, food and grocery delivery, retail and warehousing, and cab-hailing services.

How has India's job market impacted technological progress?

In India, the employment elasticity of growth is probably between 0.1 and 0.2 now, which means even if we grow gross domestic product at 10%, jobs will grow just by 1-2%.

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy produces a four-monthly estimate of employment and unemployment the employment figure has stayed stuck in the 395-405 million range.

**Read more:** [The Great Jobs Hunt – Too few Indians are seeking work and mostly among those working quality of employment isn't great](#)

Why India is more vulnerable to technological progress associated with job loss?

**a)** India has a lower level of per capita income than the rich world, **b)** India's labour market will continue to expand for another 20 years. So, job loss will be more in India, **c)** Rich nations finance welfare with higher taxation, **d)** India did not conduct factor markets (labour and land) in 1991, **e)** Reskill and upskilling the citizens is impossible to do so for a working age population of 900 million.

**Read more:** [India's big problem of low-quality employment](#)

What can be done to reverse job-displacing technologies?

**Direct tech innovation towards job-enhancing sectors and disincentivising job-replacing ones:** For this to happen a global consensus is required. This is because, **a)** In an interconnected world, it is not possible for any one country to decide on an automation policy on its own, **b)** Each country will try to frame a policy for its advantage. For example, China might advocate for job displacement technology due to its own ageing population, **c)** Jobs crisis is global in nature. So, India should under its G20 presidency at least launch a study on how technology impacts jobs. Without a deeper understanding of job-displacing technology, the world can never get our arms around the problem.

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12. [High Growth ... But Do More – India’s humming economy isn’t yet helping much of its low-income citizens, who need the education deficit bridged and policies that promote job-creation](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**High Growth ... But Do More**” published in **The Times of India** on **4th January 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the status of the Indian economy.

**News:** Lower-middle-class households are on their edge because of the pre-pandemic economic slowdown. Now, they have been forced by the pandemic to sell their property and borrow for consumption.

What do the various data show on the status of the Indian economy?

### **Data on buying**

Data from SIAM shows that domestic two-wheeler sales, bought by **lower-middle-class**, have fallen by 36% since 2018-19 and are now back at 2012-13 levels.

The sale of domestic passenger cars, typically bought by **upper-middle-class** households, fell only by 9% over the same period. And luxury car maker, Mercedes Benz, reported a 64% increase in sales in the first nine months of 2022 over 2021, and expects to match or surpass its 2018-19 sales record.

Overall, the **lower the income of the household, the more severe the demand**.

### **Data on borrowing**

RBI’s monthly bulletin indicates that commercial **bank loans against gold jewellery increased** by a huge 218% between February 2019 and August 2022.

This suggests that **households** across the board were **borrowing to support consumption**.

### **Data on selling**

According to the National Family Health Survey, average land holdings were 22% lower in the latest round (2019-21) compared to the 2015-16 round.

This suggests that the **poorest landowners** seem to be **engaged in substantial distress sales** in recent years.

**Read more:** [External risk factors for the Indian economy: Global storm: Overseas risk is main policy challenge](#)

### **Other stress indicators of the economy**

**Labour market:** Labour share in agriculture has increased over the last few years, in contrast to the steadily shrinking share before that. The demand for “last resort” MGNREGA jobs has increased from 1.64 crores in 2015 to 3.07 crores in 2022

This shows India is not creating enough jobs in manufacturing and services.

**Corporate balance sheet:** Large corporations have cleaned up their balance sheets, as have banks.

What are the opportunities for reviving the Indian economy?

**a)** As global supply chains look for alternative suppliers outside China, India could benefit, **b)** Indian services exports may grow significantly as new technologies to provide services have emerged, and **c)** Government infrastructure spending is good. But it can be enhanced further.

**Read more:** [Post-pandemic surprises and where the Indian economy truly stands today](#)

How India can revive the Indian economy?

**Limit the long-term consequences of the damage:** This can be done by ensuring children in government schools have access to remedial tutoring so that they can make up for learning losses.

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**Implement reforms on the business environment and tariffs:** This can ensure investment pick up in both foreign and domestic to create jobs. Only with more high-quality jobs, India can restore health to the lower-middle class, without which India cannot achieve our collective dream of prosperity.

### 13. [India in the GVC diversification strategy: A reality check](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**India in the GVC diversification strategy: A reality check**” published in the **Business Standard** on **5th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Economy

**Relevance**– Issues related to the global economy and trade.

**News**– The article explains the restructuring of the global value chain(GVC) in recent times. It also compare India and Vietnam on their GVC diversification

**How is the restructuring of the global economy taking place?**[Text Wrapping Break]The **restructuring of global value chains and their resilience** remained the dominant global concerns of 2022.

“**China plus one**” is now the predominant strategy of large MNCs as they face the consequences of the **US-China stand-off**.

Large MNCs have opted for **friendshoring as their preferred relocation strategy**. Among South and Southeast Asian economies, Vietnam seems to be the preferred location for regional shifts in GVCs.

**What are the differences in trends of GVC diversification by India and Vietnam?**

Between 2010 and 2018, Vietnam showed large improvement in the **foreign value added component of its gross exports**. It registered an annual increase of 17.3% in the **FVA component** over this period. It was less than 5% for Asia and India.

It helped to substantially increase Vietnam’s **share in global exports**. Vietnam’s share increased from 0.5% in 2010 to 1.6% in 2020. It is now the 20th largest goods exporter in the world. India’s share has remained stagnant at 1.6% during this period.

A further reflection of the difference in GVC participation is evident from the **share of manufactured exports**.

Both had equal share of manufactured exports in their total merchandise exports in 2010. It was 63% for both at that time. Vietnam recorded an increase to 86% in 2020 while India registered only a small increase to 71% in 2020.

**How can India and Vietnam be compared on their trade arrangements?**

**Free trade agreements**– In the case of Vietnam, the number of FRAs signed and their depth, nature of partner economies are conducive for trade. It has also Included **WTO++ provisions on environment and labour issues** in FTAs.

Vietnam’s FTAs include **RCEP, CPTPP and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework trade pillar** as well as bi-laterals with the UK and EU. It is a party to the **ASEAN FTA**.

India has an almost equal number of FTAs. But, these are not **deep** trade agreements. India does not have FTA with **developed economies** except Japan and Korea. The FTAs with Japan and Korea are under review.

India is not a member of any **mega-regional trade agreement**. India continues to be reluctant to include labour and environment-related issues in FTAs.

**Tariff structure**– Vietnam’s tariff structure is another indicator of its more open trade regime. Its average **most favoured nation tariff** for non-agricultural goods is much lower than India. A significantly higher number of tariff lines are included in the **duty-free category** and in the **lowest bracket**.

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**Logistics**– Good logistics help in reducing **trade costs** and **facilitate GVC operations**. In the **World Bank’s Logistics Performance Index**, Vietnam has registered a significant increase in the last decade. In 2018, it ranked at 39 among 160 countries. It is a major improvement relative to its consistent ranking at 53 during 2007 to 2012.

In contrast, India was ranked at 44 in 2018. It was an improvement over its 2010 rank but of a much smaller magnitude.

### 14. [Cost advantages – Nano-fertilisers will reduce subsidy outgo](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Cost advantages – Nano-fertilisers will reduce subsidy outgo**” published in the **Business Standard** on **5th January 2023**.

DAP is the second-most consumed fertiliser in India. After the success of **nano-urea**, the nano version of DAP (di-ammonium phosphate) has now cleared the bio-safety and toxicity trials.

**Relevance:** About Nano-fertilisers.

**News:** DAP is the second-most consumed fertiliser in India. After the success of **nano-urea**, the nano version of DAP (di-ammonium phosphate) has now cleared the bio-safety and toxicity trials. Nano-fertilisers are so far commercialised only in India. Further, more nano varieties of fertilisers are under development and will become available for commercial use soon.

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

What are the benefits of nano-fertilisers?

**Benefits to government:** **a)** Reduce dependence on imports, **b)** Reduce government subsidies for essential plant nutrients, **c)** **Aid in the self-sufficiency** of fertilisers over the next few years, **d)** Provide **cushion against international prices**. For instance, in the aftermath of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, there is a spike in the international prices of plant nutrients. This led to rise in fertiliser subsidies to an all-time high of over Rs 2.3 trillion in India.

**Benefits to farmers:** **a)** Provide **higher nutrient-use efficiency** and help **augment soil fertility** to boost crop yields and improve the quality of farm produce. For instance, the efficiency, yield increase of nano-urea is more than 80% (about double that of conventional urea) and 3-16% respectively, and **b)** Nano-fertilisers, being liquids packed in small bottles, are convenient to carry, thereby enabling the farmers to **save on the cost of transporting** bulky conventional fertilisers, **c)** These are substantially **cheaper and more effective** than normal fertilisers.

Overall, these nano-fertilisers would facilitate a substantial reduction in crop production costs and an improvement in the profitability of farming.

**Environmental benefits:** Conventional fertilisers are typically potent polluters of air, soil, and water. On the other hand, nano-fertilisers have low environmental footprint. They are non-toxic and harmless to health and natural biodiversity. So, they will help to cut down the agriculture sector’s greenhouse gas emissions to a considerable extent.

**Read more:** [Draft Integrated Plant Nutrition Management Bill, 2022](#)

Therefore, promoting nano-fertilisers is a win-win situation for all stakeholders.

### 15. [Online gaming must not get to game this market](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Online gaming must not get to game this market**” published in the **Livemint** on **5th January 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About regulation of Online Games.

**News:** Recently, the government released draft IT regulations for gaming. About the Draft Rules for Online Games

**Must read:** [Draft Rules for Online Gaming](#)

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What is the need for regulating Online Games?

The regulation is required because **a)** Gaming can be an addiction, just like gambling, or perhaps even alcohol, **b)** India's gaming industry will be an \$8.6 billion industry by 2026-27. So, the online game industry should flourish within a well-defined framework of rules, and **c)** With the grievance and compliance norms, online games will gain legitimacy for operating in India.

What are the challenges associated with the regulation of Online Games?

**Ambiguity in definition:** Online gaming betting and gaming betting advertisements have been brought under prohibition. But there is a grey area of what constitutes a game of skill, as opposed to a game of chance.

**Difficult in slotting games:** In the digital realm, distinctions can be even harder to make. Further, the division of roles played by skill and luck in a game can be blurry.

**Extra burden on companies:** There are many rules that exist at the state level, and imposing a central rule on top of it will create an additional burden for internet gaming companies.

What should be done to ensure proper regulation of Online Games?

**-Create a single-market regulation:** Under the regulation of Online Games, the government should create an all-India legal code.

**-The government should study the social impact and efficacy of rules.** This is because a peculiar mix of vulnerabilities warrants special caution in the online game market.

### 16. [How an orderly transition to net zero could propel growth](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "**How an orderly transition to net zero could propel growth**" published in **The Indian Express** on **6th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environment

**Relevance-** Issues related to climate change

**News-** The article explains the challenges in achieving net zero emission. It also suggests the steps needed to be taken to achieve the decarbonisation path.

India's per capita emissions are relatively low at 1.8 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e per person, but we are still the world's third-largest single emitter. India has pledged for net zero by 2070.

**What are the challenges faced by decarbonisation and emission reduction in India?**

This will not be easy. On its current trajectory, India's emissions are set to grow from 2.9 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e a year to 11.8 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2070.

It will come with a huge cost. According to a recent **McKinsey report**, **effective decarbonisation**, down to 1.9 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2070, would require India to spend a total of \$7.2 trillion on **green initiatives** by 2050. **Deeper decarbonisation** that would reduce emissions to just 0.4 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2050 would require \$12 trillion in total green investments by 2050.

**Why is the decarbonisation path beneficial for the Indian economy?**

An orderly transition to **net zero** will create an **engine for growth**. If India shifted to a renewable based **energy and materials system**, it could save as much as \$3 trillion in foreign exchange by 2070.

India is in a situation where **scope for investment** is large. Three-quarters of the buildings, infrastructure, and industrial capacity of India in 2050 is yet to be built. We have a choice to invest in current technologies or to invest futuristically.

**Futuristic investment** will need India to take urgent actions on **regulation, technology development, and technology adoption**. This is something that India has done before. In renewable power, it has built the **right policies, strong institutions and industrial capabilities** in the last decade.

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India also has other advantages. For example, it has **high taxation** on automotive fuels. This makes electric vehicles competitive against petrol or diesel ones.

### **What is the way forward to net zero in India?**

There is a need to set out five-year, 10-year, and 25-year **national decarbonisation plans**. The green technologies require higher upfront investment and.

There is a need to define a **national land use plan**. India can have a shortage of land for its dual goals of growth and decarbonisation. **McKinsey** estimates that renewable power and forest carbon sinks need 18 million additional hectares of land.

India would need to maximise the use of barren land for renewable power, **urbanise vertically**, improve **agricultural productivity**, and increase **forest density**. It requires establishing a national authority, in consultation with the states, to set land-use guidelines.

It is required to accelerate compliance with carbon markets. **Pricing carbon** creates demand signals that accelerate emissions reductions.

India needs **imagination, realism, determination** and a sense of urgency to achieve net zero.

### 17. Time to take stock – on India's military preparedness

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Time to take stock**" published in **Business Standard** on **6<sup>th</sup> January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Security

**Relevance:** challenges with the Indian military

**News:** India is the world's only major country that faces a three-and-a-half front military threat. The article discusses the military challenges that India faces.

#### **What are the challenges with Indian and its military?**

**a)** threat from two nuclear armed nation (Pakistan and China), **b)** insurgencies in Kashmir and north-east, **c)** increasing threats from China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) in land and in ocean, **d)** lack of long-term National Security Strategy (NSS), **e)** inadequate defence budget which leads to lack of manufacturing of defence equipment.

Moreover, India's military deployment has now shifted its focus from Pakistan towards China and India has also made organisational changes in its military.

#### **What organisational changes have been brought in Indian military?**

Government has restructured 17 single-service commands into a smaller number of **tri-service theatre commands**. However, concerns such as reporting authority to which theatre commands will report in the war time still remain.

Moreover, there has been very little change in the functioning of Indian armed forces even after creating a tri-service Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) in 2020.

Further, to increase the defence budget government has reduced the pension budget and has come up with Agnipath Yojana.

#### **What can be done to improve the Indian military?**

**First**, India remains the only major military power that has not laid out its strategic objectives in a published NSS. Therefore, it should focus on bringing a **National Security Strategy (NSS)**. This would help in building national defence strategy with clear military ambitions.

**Second**, there is a need for creation of a **higher defence organisation** with representatives from all the ministries in order to have a national political consensus to the military.

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### 18. [Towards making India an uplinking hub](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Towards making India an uplinking hub**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th January 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

**Relevance**– Issues related to communication sector

**News**– The article explains the major developments in the television industry since its inception. It also explains the recent policy developments in this industry and their rationale behind these policy decisions

#### **What are recent developments in the television industry?**

In 2021, the **Cable Television Network Rules, 1994**, were amended to include a statutory mechanism for grievance redressal of viewers relating to content broadcast by television channels.

In 2022, the Union Cabinet approved the **policy guidelines for the uplinking and downlinking** of television channels from India.

Uplink refers to the link from a ground station up to a satellite. A downlink is the link from a satellite down to one or more ground stations or receivers.

#### **What were the major developments in the television industry up to the 1990s?**

Television started in India in September 1959. For almost three decades, broadcasting was solely under the control of the state.

In the early 1990s, **cable television** arrived in India. The government was unprepared to check **transmission** and broadcast through **foreign satellites**. Cable television networks grew at a very fast pace, and **foreign television networks** invaded our culture through their programmes.

In order to regulate the cable network industry and to make registration of cable operators mandatory, the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995** was brought in. In 2000, the first license to set up a **teleport** was given. It is an earth station facility from where TV signals can be uplinked to a geostationary satellite.

After the 1990s, some people in India joined hands with some Non-Resident Indians in Hong Kong to launch the country’s **first private television channel** called Zee TV, in October 1992.

In the next few years, Business India Television; Asia Television Network, and Jain TV also began operating. All these channels flew out tapes every day to Hong Kong, Singapore or Moscow for uplinking. Broadcasting was obviously an expensive and cumbersome affair.

#### **What were the developments in the television industry after the 2000s?**

The Indian broadcasters were allowed to uplink from Indian soil. The facility was made available through Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited.

Government of India, notified the ‘**Guidelines for Uplinking from India**’ in July 2000 and private broadcasters got permission to set up their **own earth stations and to uplink**. The **first license** was given to TV Today Network Limited in November 2000. In 2001, five broadcasters set up their earth stations with the **facility to uplink**.

The MIB issued uplinking and **downlinking policy guidelines in 2011** for private satellite TV channels and teleports.

#### **What is the rationale behind the recent policy guidelines for uplinking and downlinking of television channels?**

The decision has been taken in view of the challenges from the **evolving broadcasting technology, changes in market scenarios and other operational developments** in the broadcasting sector.



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The guidelines aim to create a **conducive environment** in line with the principle of **ease of doing business on a sound regulatory framework**. But more importantly, these are aimed at making India a **teleport hub** for other countries.

### 19. [Green hydrogen mission: A green promise](#)

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

**“A green promise – Small enterprises can be the mainstay of the green economy”** published in **The Hindu** on **6th January 2023**.

**“Green hydrogen has got a spark that it deserves”** published in the **Livemint** on **6th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

**Relevance:** About green hydrogen mission.

**News:** The Union Cabinet has recently approved the National Green Hydrogen Mission. About the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

**Read here:** [Cabinet approves National Green Hydrogen Mission](#)

By 2030, the mission aims to have at least 5 million metric tonnes of annual green hydrogen production, electrolyser capacity of 60-100 gigawatts and a 125-gigawatt renewable energy capacity for green hydrogen and its associated transmission network.

What is green hydrogen?

**Read more:** [Green Hydrogen: Potential, Issues and Solutions – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the need for a green hydrogen mission?

**a)** Green hydrogen holds the **promise of global leadership** as the industry is still nascent worldwide, **b)** The EU, US and others have allocated big budgets for cleanly made hydrogen that can fuel vehicles, furnaces and other fuel-guzzlers, and **c)** Hydrogen is an essential industrial fuel that has a range of uses from producing ammonia, making steel and cement, to powering fuel cells that can run buses and cars. But, the cheapest way to manufacture this is to rely on fossil fuel. With a dedicated green mission India can generate it without any concerns of global warming.

What are the potential uses of Green Hydrogen?

**Read here:** [Application of Green hydrogen](#)

**a)** Ideal way to decarbonize transport and other sectors like steel, **b)** Provide much-needed policy flexibility for the government. For instance, as technology widens India’s fuel choice set, the government will get more space to manage external trade balances.

What are the potential challenges in implementing the green hydrogen mission?

**High cost:** Right now, an estimated ₹300-400 is required to produce a kilogram of green hydrogen. This must be brought down to under ₹100 for Indian output to be globally competitive.

**Issue of efficiency:** To improve efficiency every link of the supply chain has to be kept secure, that includes cheaply made but dependable electrolysers. Domestic energy deficiency has been a constraint in India.

**India’s potential to deliver:** Despite policies, India has not managed to be a net exporter of solar cells, semiconductors or wind power components. This is because India’s underlying manufacturing base continues to be weak and unable to efficiently absorb and utilise global capital.

What should be done to achieve green hydrogen mission targets?

India should **move towards decarbonization**. This is because at present decarbonization is a big policy focus around the world. For that, the green hydrogen mission is a good step. But it should be accompanied by **a)** Extension of production-linked incentive schemes to the green

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hydrogen sector, **b)** Investment in Cutting-edge R&D technologies, and **c)** Strengthening small manufacturing and allied enterprises' infrastructure. This will create a strong manufacturing base as small enterprises will be the mainstay of any green economy.

### 20. [Jolt From Joshimath – Govts have finally woken up to a hill town being on the brink of an ecological disaster. But more needs to be done](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Jolt From Joshimath – Govts have finally woken up to a hill town being on the brink of an ecological disaster. But more needs to be done**” published in **The Times of India** on **6th January 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the construction work in the Himalayan region.

**News:** After protests in Uttarakhand's Joshimath over deepening cracks in houses, the district administration has halted road and power plant construction works in the vicinity, including the char dham road work.

About the construction work in the Himalayan region

The Garhwal division is among India's most vulnerable regions. From 1976 to 2022, multiple government committees issued warnings to stop heavy construction activities.

But the state and Centre did not halt the projects. As a result, the 2013 [Uttarakhand floods](#), and last year's [Chamoli disaster](#) were caused by a rock and ice avalanche that killed 200 people in Joshimath's vicinity and damaged two hydel projects.

**Read more:** [Reasons and Solutions for disaster management in Uttarakhand](#)

What should be done to protect hilly and coastal regions?

**Change the development strategy:** Before it is too late, the government should change the frequent cave-ins and landslides marring these projects.

**Revisit the quality of environmental impact assessment(EIA):** For instance, Manipur's government decided to “revisit” the Imphal-Jiribam rail link's EIA after a landslide.

**Take eco-friendly measures:** By halting construction activities the government may dampen economic growth and job creation, but it significantly reduces the dangers of a huge ecological disaster.

Adequate assessment of landslide risks and proper preliminary structural engineering works are required to stabilise subsequent constructions in hilly and coastal regions.

### 21. [Armed drones in Indian military: Can machines understand the rules of war?](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Armed drones in Indian military: Can machines understand the rules of war?**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th January 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Security

**Relevance-** Issues with induction of modern technology for military use

**News-** The article explains the issues related to AI-enabled warfighting approaches. It also explains the increasing use of drones and underwater combat drones. It also explains issues related to underwater combat drones.

**What shows the increasing emphasis on drones by Indian armed forces?**

Indian Army is inducting **swarm drones** into its mechanized forces.

The Indian Navy has been on a mission to **expand surveillance** in India's near-seas. It has leased **MQ-9B Sea Guardian drones** from the US. It has also released an **unclassified version of its “unmanned roadmap”** for the induction of remote autonomous platforms, including **undersea vehicles**. A key driver for the enterprise is **underwater domain awareness**.

India navy is also planning to procure a fleet of armed “**Predator**” drones from the United States.

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### **Why is the Indian navy planning to induct underwater drone combat systems?**

After the conflict in Ladakh in June 2020, there is a growing sense among Indian experts and military planners that **China's undersea presence** in the Indian Ocean is increasing.

There were recent reports of the sighting of Chinese drones in the waters off **Indonesian islands**. It suggests that the PLA Navy has been studying the **operating environment** of the Indian Ocean.

There has been a rise in the deployment of **Chinese research and survey vessels** in the waters around India's **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.

Indian decision-makers are acknowledging the **warfighting abilities** of underwater autonomous platforms powered by **artificial intelligence**. They are recognizing the likely impact of **disruptive technologies** on the **maritime domain**.

**AI powered by deep learning, data analytics, and cloud computing** will alter the **maritime battlefield**.

### **What are issues with AI-enabled warfighting systems?**

AI technology is more **complicated** than many imagine. There is an **ethical paradox** connected with artificially intelligent combat systems. AI compromises the **control, safety, and accountability** of weapon systems.

It also enhances the risk of **shared liability** between networked systems. It happens particularly when weapon algorithms are sourced from abroad, and the satellite and link systems are not under the control of the user.

AI is characterized by a predisposition to certain kinds of data. Biases in the **collection of data, data analysis**, and the selection of **probabilistic outcomes** impact **rational decision-making**. It is undermining confidence in **automated combat solutions**. AI-automated weapon systems are inconsistent with the **laws of war**.

Using nascent technologies without **comprehensive testing** puts both military personnel and civilians at risk. A system of targeting human beings based on **probabilistic assessments** by computers, is problematic because the computer does not have access to all relevant data to make an **informed decision**. It is difficult to **decide accountability** in case of erroneous use of force, as blame can't be pinned on a machine.

There is no easy way of incorporating **AI-enabled warfighting approaches into doctrine**. Many technologies are in a nascent stage of development, and there is little clarity about how effective AI could be in combat.

**Military doctrine** is premised on a **traditional understanding of conflict**. There are rules and codes and **ethical standards** for warfare. **"Proportionality"** in force deployment is critical.

### **What are issues faced by the Indian navy for the use of AI powered technology and underwater combat systems?**

For the Indian Navy, **capacity limitation** restricts the development of AI. A large gap exists in the development of **critical technologies** such as system engineering, airborne and underwater sensors, and weapon systems.

The **legal issues** related to underwater combat drones are complex. It is not yet clear if unmanned maritime systems enjoy the **status of "ships" under the UN convention of the laws of the sea**.

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### 22. UGC's draft regulations-2023: Opening the campus door

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**UGC's draft regulations-2023: Opening the campus door**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th January 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Issues related to development and management of education

**Relevance**– Higher education

**News**– The article explain the new draft guidelines issued by central government to allow foreign universities in India

#### **What are important provisions contained in draft guidelines?**

The UGC draft regulations-2023 allow **top 500 foreign universities** to establish their branch campuses in India. The ranking will be decided by the UGC from time to time.

It set another criterion for a branch campus to be opened up in India that the applicant should be a **reputed institution** in its home jurisdiction.

The draft regulations-2023 allow foreign higher educational institutions to decide a fee structure that is “**transparent and reasonable**”.

Foreign higher educational institutions now have the **freedom** to decide qualifications, salary structure, and other conditions of service for appointing faculty and staff.

The Foreign Higher Educational Institutions should arrange for **adequate physical infrastructure**.

All Indian students with foreign degrees are required to get an **equivalence certificate** from the Association of Indian Universities. The draft regulations-2023 waive off **equivalence requirement** for the degrees granted by the foreign branch campuses in India.

Foreign Higher Educational Institutions shall not offer any such programme of study which jeopardises the **national interest of India** or the standards of higher education in India.

The operation of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions shall not be contrary to the **sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency, or morality**.

It allows for smooth repatriation of profits earned by the foreign branch campuses under the rules and **FEMA, 1999**.

#### **What are issues with the draft guidelines?**

It is not clear how the UGC would determine the reputation of such foreign universities that do not appear in any **world rankings** but are considered reputed in their home country.

The freedom to decide fee structure will make the courses offered by foreign universities **expensive and not accessible** to many students. It will not be in tune with the **NEP-2020 commitment** to cater to the needs of socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

The provision related to arrangement of **physical infrastructure** would be problematic for foreign higher education institutions. They will be reluctant to go for major **infrastructural investment**.

it would be difficult to ensure that the degrees offered by the foreign branch campuses would be accepted by the employers in the home countries of the campuses.

The provisions related to **sovereignty, security and national interest** would be problematic for Humanities and Social Sciences where **multiple interpretations** are popular. The foreign faculty members may find it difficult to **balance state policies, sensibilities and their intellectual standpoint**.

A major bone of contention between foreign branch campuses and the Indian government had been the issue of **repatriation of profit**. Education in India is not a profitable enterprise. It is a **public good**.

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### 23. Who Tunnels Through A Sinking Town?

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Who Tunnels Through A Sinking Town?” published in **The Times of India** on **7th January 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the construction work in the Himalayan region.

**News:** The Himalayan town Joshimath is under tremendous stress, and a portion of it may sink. About Joshimath

Joshimath, or Jyotirmath, is a temple town and a municipality in Uttarakhand’s Chamoli district. The math or monastery is one of the four cardinal institutions founded by **Adi Shankaracharya** in the four corners of India. The cantonment at Joshimath is one of the closest to the China border.

Thus, the town has both religious and strategic significance.

**Read more:** [Jolt From Joshimath – Govts have finally woken up to a hill town being on the brink of an ecological disaster. But more needs to be done](#)

What has led to this disaster in Joshimath?

–**Chamoli disaster:** The glacial avalanche known as the Chamoli disaster led to flash floods in the Rishiganga and Dhaulganga rivers in February 2021. The two rivers are tributaries of the Ganga.

The disaster killed around 200 people, including workers trapped in the [Tapovan Vishnugad hydropower plant](#)’s tunnel on the Dhaulganga river.

–According to Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority, heavy downpour, cloudburst, rock fall, debris flow, avalanche, flood/ flash floods occurred in many locations of the state. The research explains that these disasters mostly relate to **a)** meteorological regime changes, **b)** unusual rainfall patterns, and **c)** indiscriminate human actions in high-risk areas.

–**Findings of MC Mishra committee:** In 1964, the government had appointed MC Mishra committee to find out why Joshimath was sinking. The committee found that **a)** Joshimath is situated in an old landslide zone, **b)** Joshimath could sink if rampant development is unchecked. The committee recommended that substantial construction should be prohibited in the vicinity of Joshimath.

–Despite the region’s geological and environmental sensitivity, numerous hydroelectric projects including the Vishnugad hydel project have been approved in areas such as Joshimath and Tapovan.

–In 2010, two private researchers found that the tunnelling process in projects punctures the water-bearing strata and causes harm in water gushing out and flooding the area.

What are the threats posed by climate change on Himalayan ecosystem?

The Himalayan mountains are one of the youngest mountains of the world and therefore they are fragile and unstable. Small changes in the weather and climate pattern affect the mountain system strongly.

IPCC reports have made the following observations **a)** Due to global warming, the region has been experiencing extreme weather events as recorded in 2021-22. The number of extreme rainfall events that have hit Uttarakhand was unprecedented.

A **transformative change** in both thinking and the patterns of growth is necessary.

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### 24. [Her story Of War – Peace has a better chance with women in charge](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Her story Of War – Peace has a better chance with women in charge**” published in **The Times of India** on **7th January 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About inclusion of women in the peace process.

**News:** India has sent an all-women platoon of peacekeepers to Abyei, Sudan. This is the second such deployment since the deployment of female peacekeeping police unit to Liberia in 2007.

**Note:** *As of 2020, out of 95,000 UN peacekeepers, women made up only 4. 8% of military contingents and 10. 9% of police units.*

What are the impacts created by the female peacekeeping police unit in Liberia?

**a)** The deployment prompted for **recruiting of more women in the Liberian police**, **b)** After the Indian women peacekeeping force left, Liberian women made up 17% of the country’s security sector, up from 6% before their arrival.

**Read more:** [The silent revolution of Nari Shakti](#)

Why inclusion of women in the peace process is essential?

Various research have found that **1)** When women make decisions, the risks of war and conflict reduce, **2)** Civil society groups including women’s organisations make a peace agreement about 64% less likely to fail, **3)** When women participate in peace processes, the agreement is 35% more likely to last at least 15 years, **4)** Women face the worst brunt of war, in terms of sexual violence and abuse as well as displacement. The inclusion of women in the peace process will encourage women to reclaim public life without fear.

**Read more:** [What is Imphal’s Ima market, which minister Jaishankar called ‘a great example of Nari Shakti’](#)

In short, Women will be safer if there are many more women in all ranks in various government branches, including the police.