



**9 PM**

# **Compilation**

**26<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

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

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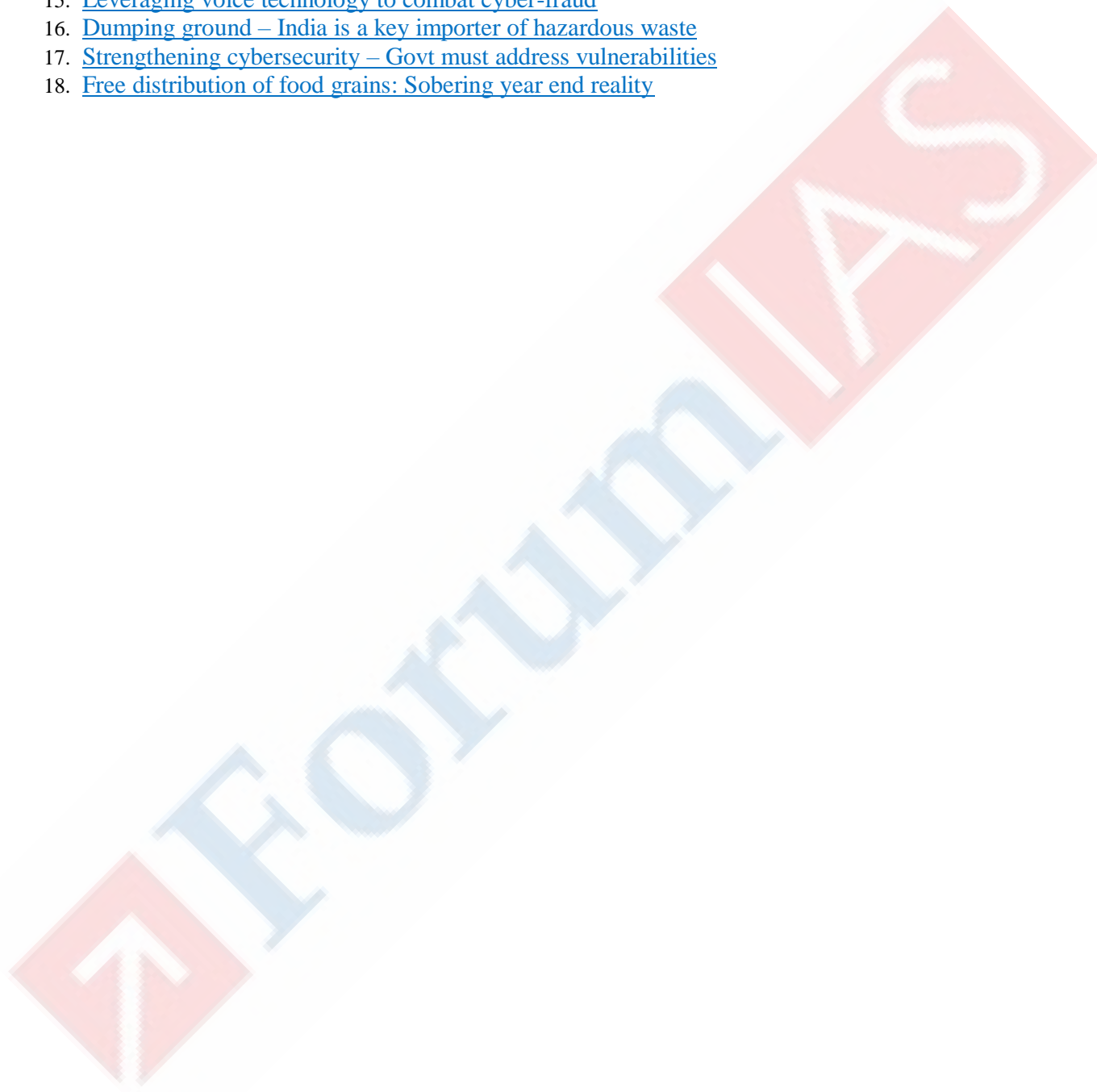
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# General Studies Paper – 1

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

### General Studies - 1

1. [Archive-Nirbhar India: Ministries must share records with National Archives, which must also get more proactive](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Archive-Nirbhar India: Ministries must share records with National Archives, which must also get more proactive**” published in **The Times of India** on **27th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 1: Salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

**Relevance:** About the National Archives of India

**News:** Record-keeping is central to modern nation-building. In such situations, the poor state of the National Archives of India is a cause for concern.

About the National Archives of India

**Read here:** [National Archives of India \(NAI\)](#)

NAI is the central repository of the government’s non-classified records.

What are the concerns with the NAI?

-There are big gaps, including important national events such as 1962, 1965 and 1971 wars and the Green Revolution.

-There is an institutional culture of secrecy in NAI. NAI is not even seeking timely declassification. On the other hand, in the US, the records are automatically declassified after 25 years.

-The defence ministry has not shared any files with NAI since 1960. Similarly, multiple other departments including agriculture, rural development, and food and consumer affairs have not shared anything ever.

In other words, the NAI is “losing a large part of our history since Independence”.

**Read more:** [Issue of shifting National Archives of India’s annexes – Explained, pointwise](#)

How NAI can be effective?

NAI provided invaluable information for the building of Central Vista. Its cartographic treasures can be similarly useful in foreign policy. This can be done by providing **a)** a clear directive to all ministries to share files with NAI, **b)** proper strengthening of State-level archives, **c)** Ensuring proper citizen outreach like that of the UK’s National Archives home page.

2. [India@75, Looking at 100: India can be a world leader in the sustainable production of cotton textiles](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article “**India@75, Looking at 100: India can be a world leader in the sustainable production of cotton textiles**” published in **The Indian Express** on **28th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS1- Economic geography. GS3- Indian economy

**Relevance–** Issues related to sustainable production by small scale industries

**News–** The article explains the impact of colonial era economic policies on the handloom sector. It explains the impact of these policies on cotton production in India. It also tells about the future prospects of the handloom sector.

In **pre-industrial times**, the many varieties of Indian cotton cloth were a source of wealth for India. Until **colonial times**, the yarn for **handloom weaving** in India had been spun by hand.

**How British colonialism impacted handloom weaving and domestic cotton production?**

**Spinning machinery** was invented in Britain. Since India was a British colony, the latter dictated its **economic policies**. **Machine-woven cotton fabrics** began to be imported. The raw cotton was shipped out to supply British industry.

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Though **Indian varieties of cotton** produced the finest fabrics in the world, they were unsuited to the newly invented textile machinery.

**American cotton varieties** having **longer, stronger staple**, were more suited to **machine processing**. So, the hundreds of varieties of Indian cotton had to become uniform.

### **How has it impacted the cotton farmers?**

Cotton in India is grown largely by small farmers. The new practices have changed the nature of farm practices from **sustainable, family-based agriculture to intensive commercial farming**. Seeds come from large multinationals. They are expensive.

American varieties need irrigation, which increases humidity. Humidity encourages **pests and fungi**. So, use of fertiliser and pesticide increases the **cost of cultivation**, but does not guarantee a good harvest. It has led to **indebtedness** of farmers.

The distress of the cotton farmer has even led to suicides. The introduction of **genetically modified seeds** has led to more severe problems.

### **What are the future prospects of the Indian handloom sector?**

It will be clean, renewable energy that will make the **small-scale environmental Indian industries** top leaders of the 21st century.

As fossil fuels deplete, earlier notions of **efficiency** will change. The **low-energy manufacturing processes** will gain value.

Markets are becoming saturated with look-alike products from factory-style mass production. There are more customers for the **individualised products of dispersed production**. **Small-batch handwoven fabrics** will become desirable in the changing markets.

The world is looking for **“green” industries**. Over the next 25 years, handloom weaving located close to cotton fields can make it a world leader in **sustainable production**.

### 3. [India must build awareness on population control](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“India must build awareness on population control”** published in **The Hindu** on **29th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS1- Population and associated issues

**Relevance:** Issues related to population control and family planning

**News:** The article explains the debates and discourses around population control in India.

India was among the first nations to address its population problem as early as 1951. While there has been a significant rise in India’s population, there has also been a sharp decline in India’s **total fertility rate**. In 1950, the TFR was at around 5.9%. As per the fifth **NFHS**, it is now 2%.

### **What is the nature of discourse around population control?**

The debate around the need for population control has been greatly **politicised** in India. The discourse around such a sensitive issue has been reduced to **petty religious issues**.

Before the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, the government came up with a **draft Bill on population control**. But the suggestions were more political than practical. It seemed to be a part of **majoritarian politics**.

### **What is indicated by data on the gap between Hindus and Muslims in adopting population control measures?**

**NFHS data** indicate that the **fertility rate** of Muslims is higher than Hindus. But, the gap between the two has shrunk substantially. In 1992-93, the gap between the Hindu and Muslim fertility rates was 1.1. It has now reduced to 0.35.

A close comparison of **Census data on average fertility rates** is insightful. For instance, Uttar Pradesh has around 20% Muslim population. Its TFR declined from 5.8% in 1981 to 2.7% in



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2011. Data also show that Muslims have adopted better **family planning measures** than Hindus.

### **Why should India not adopt population control measures?**

India's TFR is even lower than the **replacement level**. It is a remarkable step in the population control parameters.

**Forced population control** can have very dangerous consequences. It can create a **gender imbalance**.

**Forced population control measures** have not shown promising results in the countries that have implemented them. The most relevant example is China. The **one-child policy** has proved to be disastrous. It has created **demographic imbalance**. The population of China is ageing faster than in any other modern country.

### **What is the way forward for population control?**

India needs to adopt **population control measures**. But the focus should be on strengthening **public health infrastructure** and **raising awareness** about the need for population control.

Any forced control method will impact the **rate of ageing**. United Nations data show that there is a projected rise in the population of older people and a decline in the young population in many countries.

#### 4. [Veer Baal Diwas: A tale from Punjab](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “A tale from Punjab” published in **The Indian Express** on **29th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS1- Indian history and culture

**Relevance:** Important personalities and their relevance

**News:** The article explains the historical event of the sacrifice of two younger boys of Guru Gobind Singh for maintaining the dignity of their religion.

The sacrifice day of 27th December has been declared as Veer Bal Diwas. The first one was celebrated this year.

**What is the sequence of events that led to the death of two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh?**

**Read here:** [Veer Baal Diwas: PM announces 26th December as ‘Veer Baal Diwas’ to mark martyrdom of Sahibzada Zorawar Singh Ji and Sahibzada Fateh Singh Ji](#)

**Wazir Khan** was the Mughal governor of administered territories between the rivers Yamuna and Sutlej. In December 1704, Aurangzeb was Mughal ruler in Delhi.

The 10th Guru of the Sikhs and his colleagues were attacked as he proceeded from Anandpur Sahib. It is known as the **Battle of Chamkaur Sahib**.

The two elder sons of Guru Gobind Singh were killed and the two younger ones got separated. The Guru himself escaped with the help of two Pathans, Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan. He eventually took shelter in the house of a local Muslim chief.

The younger boys, along with their 81-year-old grandmother, Mata Gujri were caught by the Mughals. The boys refused to **convert to Islam**. The wazir ordered them to **be bricked alive**.

After Aurangzeb's death, his empire quickly crumbled. **Banda Bairagi** took over much of eastern Punjab. He killed Wazir Khan at the **Battle of Chappar Chiri**, known as Chandigarh now and took control over the **territories of Sirhind**.

**How is their sacrifice remembered and revered by the people?**

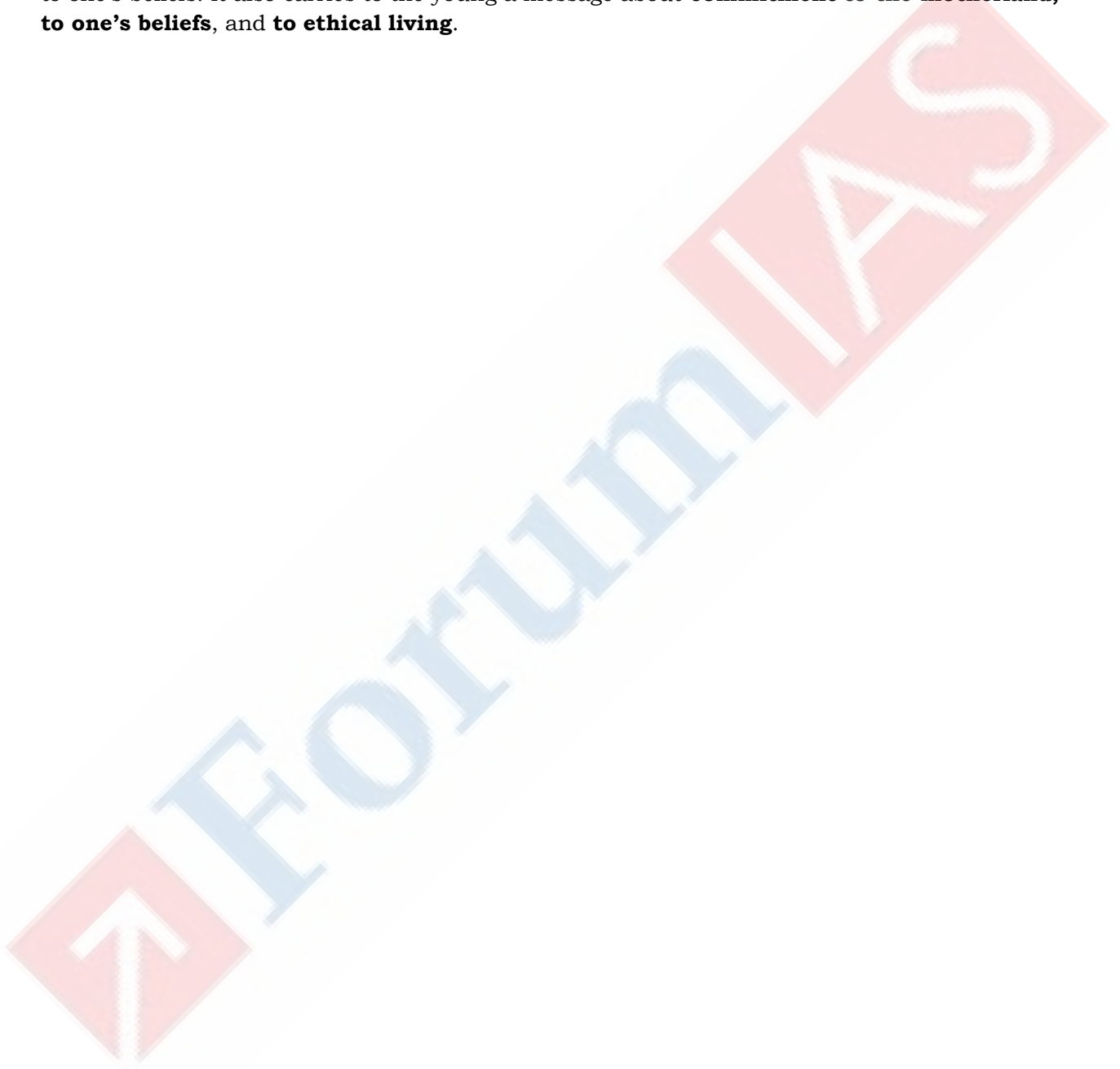
The chamber where the younger boys were bricked is located in **the Bhora Sahib**. It became a place of pilgrimage for everyone. The boys are known as **sahibzadas**. Eventually, a gurdwara came up around it.

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Nowadays, people assemble each year in the last week of December to remember the suffering and sacrifice of the family that held up the **dignity of their religion**. The gathering is called “**Jor Mel**”.

**What is the message conveyed by this event?**

One needs to retain **mental strength** in the face of adversity and a strong **ethical commitment** to one’s beliefs. It also carries to the young a message about **commitment to the motherland, to one’s beliefs, and to ethical living**.





# General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. [India-EU free trade agreement: Why we need to change our approach to negotiations](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India-EU free trade agreement: Why we need to change our approach to negotiations**” published in **The Indian Express** on **26<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** India – EU Free Trade Agreement

**News:** India-European Union (EU) are negotiating an Investment Protection Agreement (**IPA**) in their third round of Free Trade Agreement.

**What is IPA?**

It will contain investment protection standards and an independent mechanism to settle disputes between investors and states under international law.

**Why is the EU negotiating IPA with India?**

**Previous Experience:** Previous experience of India with investors such as Vodafone, Cairn Energy, etc. has not been good. India has been sued by investors for enforcement of their right under Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs).

**Lack of trust on Indian laws:** EU investors can rely on Indian laws. However, there are concerns that Indian laws can be changed anytime. Thus, harming the investors.

**Slow Indian judiciary:** Indian judiciary is slow in resolving disputes. Therefore, a separate mechanism is needed.

However, there will be concerns with the IPA due to India’s **inward-looking approach to investment protection** under international law as given in India’s 2016 Model BIT.

**What will be the concerns?**

**First**, India wants to make **tax-related regulatory measures non-justiciable** but the EU has problems accepting this due to the previous tax-related investment disputes of India with Vodafone, Cairn Energy, and Nissan.

**Second**, the EU wants to create an **investment-court like system** to resolve treaty disputes between investors and the state. This is in line with the EU’s proposal for creating a multilateral investment court (**MIC**) for which negotiations are going on at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (**UNCITRAL**). However, India does not have experience with this kind of court system.

**Third**, the EU wants to include the Most Favoured Nation (**MFN**) provision in its treaty to eliminate discrimination against EU investors. However, India is against it due to misuse of MFN clause by indulging in **disruptive treaty shopping**. Therefore, it would be better for India to negotiate for a **qualified MFN provision** rather than completely excluding it.

**Fourth**, the EU contains a fair and equitable treatment (**FET**) provision which is missing in the Indian 2016 Model BIT. **FET provision** protects foreign investors and makes states liable if it goes back on the specific assurances made to an investor to bring investments.

**How will IPA benefit India?**

**The overall FDI to India has stagnated for the past decade at around 2 percent of the GDP.** Even though the EU share in foreign investment stock in India has increased, it is below the share of EU investment in China and Brazil.

Further, India’s decision to unilaterally terminate BITs has negatively impacted FDI inflows to India. Therefore, **India needs the IPA with the EU to attract FDI** for becoming a \$10-trillion economy by 2030.

However, India should review the 2016 Model BIT, evolve a clear position on MIC and maintain high transparency in negotiations.

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### 2. Constitutional silences, unconstitutional inaction

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Constitutional silences, unconstitutional inaction**”, published in **The Hindu** on **26<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 2 – Indian Polity – Issues related to federal structure

**Context:** Constitution does not prescribe any time limit for Governor to give assent to bills passed by the Legislative Assembly. It has led to arbitrary holding of bills.

The Constitution adopted by India allows for the modification and amendment of its provisions by the Parliament in accordance with the will of the people.

However, it has left many gaps. One such gap is under article 200 of the constitution, the lack of a timeline for the Governor to give assent to bills passed by the Legislative Assembly.

This has allowed Governors in states with opposition-ruled governments to delay the implementation of democratically elected mandates. Few such examples are the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gambling and Regulation of Online Games Bill and the Kerala Lok Ayukta (Amendment) Bill.

This situation is also present in the states of Telangana and West Bengal.

Similarly, President also has been acting arbitrarily in granting assent to the Bills reserved by the Governor for the consideration of the President, under article 201. For example, National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET)-exemption Bill.

However, there is a time-limit of 6 months for the State Assembly to reconsider the Bill if the President decides to refer it back to the House.

**What has been the position of judiciary and legislatures on timelines for Governor and President on giving assent?**

**Constituent Assembly:** During a Constituent Assembly discussion on the draft of Article 200, Professor Shibban Lal Saxena pointed out that there is no prescribed time limit for the Governor to act.

**Purushothaman Nambudiri vs State of Kerala (1962):** The Supreme Court (SC) has also clarified that the Constitution does not specify a time limit for the Governor to provide assent to Bills. But Courts have maintained that the Governor or President must honour the will of the Legislature and act only in harmony with their Council of Ministers.

Any delay to assent Bills will be an arbitrary exercise, which in itself is constitutionally unjust.

**National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution:** Commission led by A.B. Vajpayee government in 2000 recommended, there should be a time-limit, for the Governor to take a decision whether to grant assent or to reserve a Bill for consideration of the President.

**What should be done?**

**Sarkaria Commission:** The commission suggested that the delay from the side of the Governor in granting assent can be avoided by streamlining the existing procedures. Prior consultation should be held with the Governor at the stage of the drafting of the Bill itself, and by prescribing time-limits for its disposal.

**Keisham Meghachandra Singh vs The Hon'ble Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly (2020):** In this case of anti-defection law, the SC held that the Speaker must act on disqualification petitions against the defecting MLAs within a 'reasonable time'. It clarified in the same judgment that reasonable time is three months in the case of disqualification petitions. The same reasonable time limit should be set for Governor.

**Westminster system:** The bedrock of the Westminster system is the concept that the **Queen reigns, but the Ministers rule**. Therefore, the Governor's duty is only to ensure that an elected government is working within the parameters of the Constitution. The constitutional vacuum should not give way for unconstitutional inaction, leaving space for anarchy in the rule of law.

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### 3. [Why the Centre is right in not extending the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana scheme?](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the articles

“**Why the Centre is right in not extending the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana scheme**”, published in **Indian Express** on **26<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

“**A welcome move**” published in **The Hindu** on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

**Syllabus Topic** – GS Paper 2 – Issues related to hunger and Poverty

**News:** The Government has decided not to extend the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana, (PMGKY).

Read – [Features of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana, \(PMGKY\)](#)

#### **Benefits of PMGKY**

**First**, PMGKY absorbed the shock of the pandemic for the extreme poor.

**Second**, the scheme has provided distress relief to the neediest and helped the Government control its food buffer stocks better.

**Third**, it will also reduce wastage of procured food grains at a time when procurement figures for rice and wheat by the Food Corporation of India remain high.

**Fourth**, the PDS and the PMGKY have also acted as income transfers for the poor by allowing them to buy other commodities that they could not have afforded.

#### **How discontinuation of the scheme is beneficial?**

**First**, the scheme is neither physically nor fiscally sustainable.

**Second**, the current stocks of rice and wheat in the Central pool, at 55.46 mt on December 1, are a third lower than a year ago. There isn't that much grain in the Food Corporation of India's warehouses today to distribute.

#### **What are the alternative announcements made by the government?**

Government will bear the expenses under National Food Security Act (NFSA). Under NFSA, the 5 kg/person/month grains would be provided, free of cost for one year from January 2023. NFSA beneficiaries will, henceforth, receive not just subsidized grain but free grain up to 5 kg.

#### **What are the benefits of alternative scheme?**

For this new provision, Government agencies don't need to procure more than 60-65 mt annually. The actual procurement, has averaged 90-100 mt (55-60 mt rice and 35-40 mt wheat) in the recent times. It will handle the overflowing public godowns from excessive procurement.

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

Universalization of the PDS can be considered. It has already worked well in a few States such as Tamil Nadu, as the scheme would be availed by anyone in need instead of a flawed targeting system.

### 4. [Administering Change](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Administering Change**” published in **The Times of India** on **26th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Role of civil services in democracy

**Relevance**– Civil services reforms

**News**– The article explains the challenges faced by administration in India. It also suggests the solutions to reform the administration.

Recently, there was forced retirement of 10 senior department of telecom officials, some with doubtful integrity. Since 2014, GoI has retired around 400 officers for lack of integrity or non-performance. Most were Group A and Group B officers.

#### **What are challenges to government administration?**



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Everyone enters the system young and there are *equal opportunities* to progress ahead. But the **assured promotion system** irrespective of performance, too many departments performing no significant functions ruin many officers.

There exist **corrupt nexuses** that form over a long career being close to netas and moneyed interests.

**Lateral hiring** is not given much importance. Recruits are struggling for **acceptance and direction**.

Only **4% of India's workforce** comprise public servants. Compare this to 22.5% in the UK, 13.5% in the US and 28% in China.

**What is the way forward to reform administration?**

Too many mid-career and senior officers have **integrity and performance deficits**. GoI must find ways to identify and offload them following **due process**. It should be done alongside recruiting **meritorious replacements**.

**National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building** that is aiming to reshape **post-recruitment training mechanisms** and GoI's HR policies, is important.

**Mid-career appraisals** to weed out inept officers will have to proceed concurrently with greater public service recruitment.

State governments must also reform **public employment policies**. Combined employment of states is much more than GoI and state bureaucracy's interface with the ordinary citizen is much larger.

Centre and states should also **pursue disinvestment** more vigorously. They should use part of the proceeds to **reform administration**.

### 5. [Why the government must push ahead on free trade agreements](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Why the government must push ahead on free trade agreements**" published in **The Indian Express** on **27th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** Concerns associated with free trade agreements

**News:** The Indian government is increasing its free trade agreement with many countries like Australia, the UAE, etc. FTA will ensure trade benefits to India, but there are also concerns associated with it.

**What are the concerns associated with trade agreements?**

There are **non-tariff issues** ranging from carbon emission norms, climate action, etc. coming up. Therefore, India is concerned that partner countries might impose **non-tariff protectionist measures** and not allow India to fully take advantage of the trade pacts.

**For example**, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (**CABM**) of the European Union. It is meant to target carbon-intensive products such as iron and steel, cement, aluminium and fertilisers.

CABM will impose tariffs on imported goods on the basis of emissions during their production process. This will ensure that the EU's climate objectives are not threatened by the production of other countries with less ambitious policies.

However, this will act **as a barrier and burden on Indian exporters**. Manufacturers of steel in India will be at a disadvantage when compared to those in the US where lower carbon is emitted.

**What is the way ahead?**

India needs to examine these issues with care and then proceed with negotiations. India's **domestic reform agenda must be aligned with these trade pacts** to ensure that the benefits from these trade pacts can be maximised.

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Moreover, India also needs to change its domestic decision such as recently it has decided to raise import duties on non-essential items. It impacts India's image globally and acts as a counter to trade agreements being made.

Therefore, India must lower barriers to trade, and seek actively to be a part of global value chains while adopting China plus one strategy.

### 6. [Laws and order – Decriminalisation will improve business environment](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Laws and order – Decriminalisation will improve business environment**” published in **Business Standard** on **27th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance.

**Relevance:** Key provisions of the Jan Vishwas Bill.

**News:** The government has come up with **Jan Vishwas Bill** in the Parliament. The bill aims at **decriminalizing certain offences**, thereby, improving the **ease of doing business and reducing the judicial burden**.

**What are the key provisions of the bill?**

The Bill proposes to remove a two-year imprisonment term under the **India Post Office Act of 1898** for sending unpaid postal articles.

It proposes to omit **Section 66A of the IT Act**. This provision punishes any person who sends offensive information using a computer or electronic device and sends false information.

This provision of the IT Act was **declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court** and was struck down in 2015. However, still, various state jurisdictions continued to make arrests under this section.

Further, the bill also aims to decriminalise certain offences under the **Environment Act**.

**For example**, discharging pollutants in excess of specified standards, handling hazardous substances without adequate safeguards and not allowing the central government to investigate an offence attracted imprisonment of up to five years, a fine of Rs 100,000, or both.

The draft bill has done away with the imprisonment but retains a fine ranging from Rs 500,000 to Rs 5 crore with daily fines for continuous compliance violations.

These amendments aim at ensuring ease of doing business. However, decriminalising certain offences in the environmental law will **degrade India's natural resources** as industries hardly comply with the laws.

**What is the way ahead?**

There is an urgent need for both the Centre and states to ensure that their respective enforcement agencies are informed about the amendments and the latest decision of the SC regarding it.

This will ensure proper implementation of the laws while improving the ease of doing business.

### 7. [Focus on Africa, the heart of the Global South](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Focus on Africa, the heart of the Global South**” published in **The Hindu** on **28th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Regional groupings and agreements affecting India interest

**Relevance** – India and Africa relationship in context of its increasing importance in global affairs

**News-** The article explains the dynamics of US and Chinese relations with Africa. It explains the opportunity for India to improve its relationship with Africa in the context of the G20 presidency.

**What are the recent initiatives by the US to improve its relationship with Africa?**

The **second U.S.-Africa summit** was held in Washington in the month of December this year. They discussed the **political, security, and economic cooperation** related issues.



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Mr. Biden declared that **African voices, leadership and innovation** are critical to address the most pressing **global challenges**. It is needed to realise the vision of a **free, open, prosperous and secure world**. The U.S. is “all in on Africa and all in with Africa.”

Several important decisions were taken.

The U.S. announced its support for the AU to join the G20 as a permanent member. It announced full support for UNSC reform to include permanent representation for Africa.

A promise for the president and the vice president to visit Africa next year was made.

The U.S. announced new investments and initiatives. It includes \$21 billion to the IMF to provide funds for low-and middle-income countries, and \$10 million to boost the security capacity of its African partners.

The administration indicated that it planned to invest \$55 billion in Africa over the next three years.

### **What is the status of Chinese relationship with Africa?**

China is the **largest trading partner** and the **fourth largest investor** in the African continent. It has emerged ahead of the U.S. through its steady **diplomacy and extensive economic engagement**.

In 2021, China-Africa bilateral trade was \$254 billion. While the U.S.-Africa trade stood at \$44.9 billion. The U.S. investment in Sub-Saharan Africa was \$30.31 billion last year. In comparison, China’s total investment was \$43.4 billion.

**Forum on China-Africa Cooperation** was established in October 2000. It is composed of ministers and leaders of Africa and China who meet once in three years. The Chinese president participates in deliberations in person or digitally.

China has a **full-fledged inter-ministerial mechanism** to ensure the **timely implementation** of FOCAC decisions. The last meeting expressed support for **One-China Principle, the Global Development Initiative, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the vision of “a community with a shared future**. These are part of the **Chinese agenda**.

The Chinese foreign minister visits annually to Africa.

### **What is the way forward for India to improve its relationship with Africa?**

**India’s equity** in Africa is older and richer than that of China and the U.S. But it should not make India complacent.

The **G20 presidency** is an opportunity for India to ensure that the AU becomes a **permanent member** of this grouping and to firmly reflect **Africa’s Agenda 2063 for development**.

India and the U.S. should work closer together in Africa.

The **fourth India-Africa Forum Summit** should be held in early 2024.

### 8. [A retelling of the Indian migrant worker’s plight](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**A retelling of the Indian migrant worker’s plight**” published in **The Hindu** on **28th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Indian diaspora and vulnerable sections of population

**Relevance**– Issues related to emigration

**News**– The article explains the status of immigration across the world. It also explains the challenges faced by migrants. It also suggests the way forward for improving the conditions of migrants in India

### **What is the status of immigration across the world?**

According to the **World Migration Report 2022**, there were 281 million international migrants globally in 2020. Nearly two-thirds are labour migrants.

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South Asia's share is nearly 40%. The **South Asia-Gulf Migratory corridor** is the world's largest migrant corridor.

Long-term data on international migration show that migration is not **uniform** across the world. It is shaped by **economic, geographic, demographic and other factors**. It results in **distinct migration patterns**, such as **migration corridors** developed over many years.

Recently, 300 Indian engineers from Tamil Nadu were trafficked to Myanmar to work for a crypto-scam. Joblessness due to COVID-19 was responsible for it.

### **What are issues with immigration in India?**

India is the **largest migrant-sending and remittance-receiving** country. But, the **welfare of Indian migrants** abroad does not seem to be a priority for the Government and policymakers. India lacks a **tangible and comprehensive migration policy** to ensure decent living and safe movement of migrants.

Migration to abroad is governed by the **Emigration Act**. However, the Indian government has been silent on the issue of updating the Act.

### **What are the challenges faced by immigrants across the world?**

The United Nations, through its **non-binding resolution**, "**Global Compact for Safe, Orderly Migration and Regular Migration**", recognises the challenges migrant labour faces across the world.

The recurring problems faced by migrants are **irregular payment, poor working conditions, negation of labour rights**. There is absence of a proper **grievance redress mechanism**. They don't have access to a **transparent judicial system**.

Rich employers in GCC violate **basic labour laws** and refuse regular salaries and dues. They are from different nationalities, including Indians.

The pandemic has resulted in **unemployment, under-employment**. It has led to reduction in salaries, and non-payment of salaries, compensation and residual dues.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the existing exploitative nature of the **Kafala system**.

### **What are some steps taken by countries for improving the conditions of migrants?**

Presently, South Asian countries and their civil society members are leading a '**justice for wage theft**' campaign. It is for the disbursement of the pending salary benefits and other related dues of labour.

Countries such as the Philippines which have recorded the **wage theft** of their migrants are taking up the issue legally.

### **What is the way forward to improve the conditions of migrants?**

Attention needs to be focussed on the **women migrant workforce**. They are largely limited to **GCC countries** and also to the **OECD countries** to some extent.

Indian nurses and care-givers have been working in the **most volatile countries** such as Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen and Israel.

Government should comprehensively assess the situation of migrant women. It should create **women-centric, rights-based policies**.

The Government of India has to revisit its policies in the **post-pandemic migratory scenario**. It **should** engage all stakeholders and pass the **Emigration Bill 2021**.

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### 9. Many Docs but What's The Prescription? – Breakneck growth in the quantity of doctors is coming at the cost of their quality

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**So Many Docs but What's The Prescription? – Breakneck growth in the quantity of doctors is coming at the cost of their quality**” published in **The Times of India** on **28<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 2 – Governance**

**Relevance:** concerns with increasing medical colleges and doctors

**News:** India has increased its number of medical colleges and MBBS seats and it is closer to the target of one doctor per 1,000 population on aggregate.

**How have medical colleges transformed over years?**

**Between 1980 and 2010:** The private medical colleges increased rapidly between these years. This expansion was accompanied by **corruption, substandard colleges** that lacked the necessary infrastructure and faculty.

**After 2011:** A large number of new government colleges opened since 2011, especially in the **southern and western states and Uttar Pradesh**. The government also decided a **policy to convert district hospitals into medical colleges** to ensure one for each district causing an increase in the number of colleges.

Moreover, from 2014, 270 new colleges came up but many **government colleges started to resemble private ones** in having inadequate faculty and poor standards of teaching/ training.

**What is the recent decision taken by the government?**

The health minister has recently talked of a paradigm shift from an **input-based to outcome-based approach**.

The **input-based system** focuses on ensuring adequate infrastructure, faculty and patient load, all of which impact the quality of teaching and training whereas the **outcome-based** only focuses on increasing the number of MBBS graduates.

Therefore, this approach of government of increasing doctors and medical colleges have many concerns associated with it.

**What are the concerns with medical education and with the increasing number of colleges?**

The increase in the number of colleges comes at the price of **poor-quality teaching and training** and hence poorly equipped doctors as more MBBS seats do not mean greater accessibility.

The **fees even for government medical colleges** have been increasing and seats being reserved for NRIs.

Further, the current **medical entrance exam** favours those with access to expensive coaching, **richer and more urban households** having a better chance of becoming doctors.

Moreover, there has been an **irregular distribution of doctors** even when the number of doctors has risen from 0.5 in 2000 to 0.9 per thousand, closer to the WHO guidelines.

**For example**, north and northeast India are facing shortage while south and west India have the highest concentration. Therefore, there could be areas where the doctor-population ratio could be as less as one per 10,000.

Moreover, MBBS graduates treating people without proper training is injustice to the citizens as they are expected to take charge in primary health centres to get initial training.

Therefore, bringing in more doctors is not the solution without realising the consequences of poorly trained physicians and taking firm steps to improve the quality of teaching/training along with proper distribution.



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### 10. Equipping IAS officers to deal with the manufacturing sector

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Equipping IAS officers to deal with the manufacturing sector**” published in **Indian Express** on **28<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 2 – Governance

**News:** There has been policy related issues that are blocking rapid growth of the manufacturing sector.

To become an attractive destination for manufacturing investment, India needs to solve the issues, which is making it a difficult country to manufacture and do business.

Therefore, it becomes important to analyse, why existing personnel charged with policy execution have been failing.

While the political leadership lays down the vision, the responsibilities for translating these into ground realities are that of IAS officers.

Therefore, the development of Manufacturing is only possible if the concerned civil servants in the ministries have good manufacturing domain knowledge.

IAS officers need to know how to add to or reduce the costs of manufacturing, create demand for enabling industry to achieve economies of scale, and generation of profits and internal resources for growth.

**So, how to equip IAS officers to become much more effective in dealing with the manufacturing sector as well as other areas of development?**

It requires reforms in our system of human resource development and bringing it in line with the best global practices.

#### **A new wing**

A wing should be created in the Department of Personnel & Training, and its counterparts in the states.

This wing should be responsible to select officers on the basis of aptitude from the IAS and other services, and train them to frame and implement policies relating to manufacturing and industrial development.

It should report directly to the Prime Minister to insulate it from pressures from various quarters.

#### **Selection and training of officers**

The selection of officers could be made after they have completed around 10 years of service.

Thereafter, selected officers would need to be trained and given postings that would enable them to gain more knowledge and experience.

For knowledge and experience, a temporary appointment to selected private companies should be made.

It would acquaint officers to market based competition and select companies in different manufacturing sectors could be able to trust the government officers.

These officers should be assessed from time to time to move them into the policy making stage for manufacturing sector.

#### **How to resolve some past challenges?**

The previous such attempts have been failed due to issues linked to promotions and postings. It has prevented some skilled officers to be appointed at right places. This problem can be resolved by Japanese model.

The Japanese model was implemented in Maruti. The model was to de-link salary scales from job responsibilities.

It means the most suitable person for the job will be posted for higher responsibilities. However, her/his pay scale will not change due to this. Annual increases in pay scales and movement from one scale to another followed a different system.

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### 11. [What is the CAG audit report on Assam's NRC?](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**What is the CAG audit report on Assam's NRC?**” published in **The Hindu** on **28<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 2 – Governance – Transparency and accountability

**News:** CAG has flagged issues in the NRC exercise carried out in Assam.

#### **What are issues highlighted by CAG report in Assam's NRC?**

Secure and reliable software was required for the exercise, however, software utilities were added to the core software. Haphazard development of software for the exercise, made it prone to data tampering.

Undue profits worth crores amassed by the system integrator (SI) by violating the Minimum Wages Act.

Test check of records revealed irregularities in the utilisation of funds including “excess and inadmissible payment to vendors”.

Amount of wages paid to the outsourced staff was 45.59%-64.27% less than what was approved by the NRC coordination committee.

#### **Recommendations made by CAG report**

First, penal measures to be taken against Wipro Limited for violating the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act and for paying data operators less than minimum wages.

Action against the State Coordinator of National Registration (SCNR) for “excess, irregular and inadmissible payments”.

**Fixing accountability of the SCNR as the principal employer** for “not ensuring compliance with the Minimum Wage Act”.

### 12. [China, West, G20 Presidency: Opportunities & concerns for India in 2023](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**China, West, G20 Presidency: Opportunities & concerns for India in 2023**” published in **The Indian Express** on **28<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**Relevance-** Foreign policy and changing international dynamics

**News-** The article explains the strategic scenario across the world that matters for India foreign policy establishment. It also explains the challenges and opportunities for India.

#### **What are six hard realities for the Indian strategic establishment?**

**Russia-Ukraine war:** The Russian invasion of Ukraine has upended the **global order** in place since World War II. It has impacted the world's **food and energy security**. It can lead to **global economic recession**.

The **nuclear threat** from Russian leaders is a cause of worry. The **Strategic alignment** between Russia and China is another concern.

**China's aggression: China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific** may create disruptions. India is facing that **aggression** on its border.

China is also constructing an island in the **South China Sea**.

**Ties with the West being tested:** India's ties with the West are going through a stress test due to the **Russia factor**. The India balancing act has been perceived as opportunistic by US and Europe.

Delhi is seen as following its interests and not being guided by “**shared values**”. European partners have criticised India for buying cheap oil from Russia.

There is absence of a full time **US ambassador** in India for two years.

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**Engagement with Taliban:** India reopened its limited operations in the Indian embassy in Kabul in June. Delhi had begun the process of **re-engaging** by sending **humanitarian aid**. It has made a commitment of USD 80 million for improving the lives of Afghans.

But, India will not compromise on **extremism and rights of minorities and women**.

Finally, Delhi is finally looking at the Taliban as a **political actor**.

**Pakistan turmoil:** Imran Khan led government was ousted and the Shehbaz Sharif-led coalition has formed the government in May. The rhetoric against India has lowered a bit. But, there has been no movement in **bilateral ties**.

Towards the end of the year, Pakistan got a new Army chief. This is the **real transition of power** in this country.

**Neighbourhood in crisis:** The Sri Lankan **economic and political crisis** was a major challenge in the neighbourhood. India provided humanitarian aid, fuel, medicines.

Delhi is also helping the island country negotiate an **economic debt relief package** from the International Monetary Fund. Delhi wants a government that understands India's **security and strategic interests**.

Engagement with Myanmar has continued in **low-key visits**. India has sought to not **isolate** the military regime, unlike the western partners.

The key impact has been the **influx of refugees** from Myanmar to the north-eastern states through the **porous borders**. There are concerns about **non-state actors** creating trouble in the north-east.

**What are six challenges and opportunities for 2023?**

**Dealing with China:** Beijing is challenging the **status quo**, not just in eastern Ladakh but in other sectors along the border with India. It was evident from the Arunachal clash.

As China sees itself as a **superpower**, there will be more clashes and competing interests with India. It will have to be resolved through negotiations.

**Engaging with Russia:** The **border standoff** with China has shown Russia's importance in India's strategic calculus.

However, increasing closeness between Russia and China is cause of worry for India. Economic relations have formed the **"new strategic basis"** for Sino-Russian relations.

India will try to engage with both Russia and the West, and put its strategic defence and national security interests first.

**G20 as a global stage:** New Delhi, has already positioned itself as the **"voice of the Global South"**. It will seek to put its priorities on the global forum.

In this context, it will also seek to bring Russia and the West together and end the conflict in Europe. If it manages to do so, it can claim a diplomatic win.

**Ties with the West:** Delhi will have to address the concerns of European and American partners. In fact, the **G20 preparations** will give some opportunity to do that.

**Challenge in the neighbourhood:** Sri Lanka will continue to demand India's **humanitarian, financial and political attention** in the new year.

India will also be part of **political conversation** in Maldives. The Maldives is going to polls in September. Delhi will be watching closely as political parties try to project India as the bully and a big brother.

Bangladesh also goes into **election mode** in 2023. India will be looking at the prospects of Sheikh Hasina after a long political journey that has brought **security in India's eastern states**.

In Nepal, Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda has become the Prime Minister. Former PM Oli is holding the keys to the government. This will pose a significant challenge for Delhi. **Beijing's influence** is growing in Kathmandu in recent years.



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**Pakistan's crucial year:** Elections in Pakistan are scheduled for later in 2023. The new civilian government and the Army chief will shape their attitude towards India.

**What is the way forward for our strategic establishment?**

Our domestic efforts will need to be bolstered by **smart partnerships** with others. **New relationships** are necessary. But, there is a need to keep old partners like Russia by our side. India should engage all countries including China, and **resolve outstanding matters** with our smaller neighbours.

### 13. [Labourer wages – Any delay in funds to be paid to States for MGNREGS payments is unethical](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Labourer wages – Any delay in funds to be paid to States for MGNREGS payments is unethical**” published in **The Hindu** on **29th December 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** About wage delay in MGNREGS.

**News:** Recently there has been a debate in Parliament regarding withholding funds for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in West Bengal. About MGNREGS

**Read here:** [MGNREGA](#)

What are there is a wage delay in MGNREGS?

According to an NPO, almost ₹2,744 crore was still due to workers for work done since December 26, 2021. This is contradictory to Section 3 of the NREG Act. The wage delays have resulted in a drop in the number of households working under the scheme.

The wage delay happened due to **a)** A delay in funds disbursement from the centre to the States due to procedural delays and an overhauling of the [Public Financial Management System](#) of the Finance Ministry, and **b)** Non-compliance with the directives of the Central government by states and fund misuse.

**Read more:** [MGNREGA: Issues and Significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to reduce wage delay in MGNREGS?

-The Union government should **set aside adequate funds** at the beginning of the financial year.  
-The government should emphasise on reducing the misuse of funds by using technocratic approaches.

**Note:** Recently, the government has introduced digital capture of MGNREGS attendance mandatory at the work sites.

A scheme such as MGNREGS needs to evolve while keeping its core idea of a demand-driven work allocation intact. Treating it as a burden will only hurt genuine beneficiaries.

### 14. [From Bharat Jodo to Jan Aakrosh: The Yatra lives on](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article “**From Bharat Jodo to Jan Aakrosh: The Yatra lives on**” published in **The Indian Express** on **30th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Polity

**Relevance–** Issues related to electoral [politics

**News–** The article explains the historical background and relevance of political yatras.

An opposition party leader is undertaking Bharat Jodo Yatra. In Bihar, party in power will undertake another pan-state yatra. In Rajasthan also, opposition has been on a Jan Aakrosh Yatra since December 1.

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### What is the history of political yatras?

The idea of yatra has persisted since the days of Mahatma Gandhi. Despite Advances in the digital communication space, it refuses to fade away.

Its resilience shows that politics is essentially about people and **personal contact** remains key. Gandhi **awakened** a nation against the colonial rulers with the Salt March in 1930. It showcased the Yatra as a powerful instrument of **political assertion**.

### What are the purposes served by these yatra?

Over the years, yatra has been used to serve various purposes. These are used as a **mobilisational tool and force multiplier**. Sometimes they are undertaken for mere **assertions of relevance**.

Chandra Shekhar, could emerge as the country's premier Opposition leader after his Bharat Yatra in 1983.

L K Advani's Rath Yatra for a Ram temple at Ayodhya polarised the country and turned around the political fortunes of the BJP.

Nitish Kumar has undertaken several yatras as chief minister. His yatras are aimed at **projecting the persona** and achievements of the government in Bihar.

### Are yatras enough to achieve political aims?

The yatra is not enough. Much work is needed to be done for its **lasting effect**.

A **robust organisation** is necessary to harness and **channelise the energy** generated by a yatra. It is required to build on its message and take it to the voters.

### 15. [Friendly neighbours – on India Maldives relations](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Friendly neighbours**” published in **The Hindu** on **30th December 2022**.

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

**Relevance**– India and Maldives relationship

**News**– The article explains the recent political developments taking place in Maldives and its relevance for bilateral relationship between India and Maldives

### What are important developments taking place in Maldives?

Former Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen was **convicted** by a criminal court in the Maldives just a year ahead of general elections.

It could affect his plans to lead the opposition alliance due to **constitutional provisions** of Maldives.

Mr. Yameen did not enjoy a good relationship with India. As opposition leader, he has spearheaded the “**India Out**” campaign.

Mr. Yameen had **close links with China**. His conviction may provide some relief to India.

### Why India needs to be cautious about recent developments in Maldives?

India's **infrastructure aid, credit lines, loans and commissioning of various projects** have created visible impacts.

Close ties and **high-level military exchanges** since 2018 have raised speculation that India is eyeing a base.

While Mr. Yameen may not be allowed to run in the next election, this might make space for even more **radical elements** in the opposition combine.

The Solih government has been prompt in countering Mr. Yameen's allegations. But, the protests have gained some traction in parts of the country.

### What is the way forward for India?

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India must keep a close watch on other parts of Maldivian politics. It includes the rift between India's closest friends there, President Solih and former President Nasheed.

India must actively project the image of a **friendly and helpful neighbour**. It should not explicitly be seen as interfering in the electoral process.

The Government needs to **tread carefully** when it comes to domestic politics in Maldives.

### 16. Defending the constitutional order

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Defending the constitutional order**” published in the **Business Standard** on **30th December 2022**.

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

**Relevance**– Independent working of institutions

**News**– The article deals with the issue of appointment of judges of higher courts and election commissioners.

#### **What is the system of appointment of judges of higher courts?**

The present procedure for the appointment of judges of higher courts is based on the **SC judgements of 1993 and 1998**. It involves a **collegium of senior Supreme Court judges** headed by the Chief Justice of India.

The executive can ask them to **reconsider** but it has to accept if the collegium reasserts its recommendation. However, it can hold up appointments by sitting on the recommendation.

The government introduced a law to set up a **NJAC** to make recommendations for higher court judge appointments. But this was struck down by the Supreme Court based on the argument that it compromised the **independence of the judiciary** from the executive.

#### **What was the viewpoint of the constituent assembly on appointment of judges?**

The Constituent Assembly debate on this matter clearly indicated a universal belief in ensuring the **independence of the judiciary** from the executive. Hence the Assembly took the **middle ground**. It was agreed to consultation with the Chief Justice.

According to Ambedkar, “it would be dangerous to leave the appointments to the executive, without any kind of reservation or limitation.

An amendment was proposed to replace the word “**consultation**” with the word “**concurrence**”. But, it was not accepted. Another rejected amendment was to involve the parliament.

#### **What was the viewpoint of the constituent assembly on appointment of election commissioners?**

According to the Constitution, the appointment of the election commissioners shall be made by the President, on the advice of the Cabinet.

In the Constituent Assembly, the **committee on fundamental rights** recommended that the **independence of the elections** should be provided for in the chapter dealing with fundamental rights. But, it was agreed that this should be in the part dealing with the **establishment of an Election Commission**.

The Assembly affirmed that the election management body should be freed from any kind of **interference from the executive** of the day.

#### **What are issues with the appointment of election commissioners?**

The **strong role of the executive** in the appointment of election commissioners has been rightly criticised. Short tenures of an average 20 months, since 2001 shows the politicization of appointment.

One of the chief CEC, after leaving office, held a ministerial position in the government.



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Another instance of the **executive dominance** was rejection of CEC's proposal to remove an election commissioner, whose independence was questionable. The commissioner concerned was later made a CEC.

**What is the way forward for appointment of higher courts judges and election commissioners?**

**Election commissioners**– The procedure for appointment needs to ensure the **independence** of the Election Commission. It should be made more **transparent and acceptable** to the electorate and the parties.

L K Advani in 2012, had suggested the appointment of the CEC by a committee chaired by the prime minister and which would include the chief justice, the law minister and the leaders of the Opposition in both houses. It may be considered.

There is a need for a **more transparent system** by making the collegium process more open to scrutiny. Executive should not be empowered beyond a certain level. The central goal must be to preserve the **independence of the judiciary** from the executive.

The Constitution was drafted at a time when there was a **commitment of politicians to democracy**. Hence there were few safeguards for **independence of institutions**.

The **political environment** has changed. We now need an **explicit process** that maintains the **independence and credibility** of institutions that are central for **democracy and the rule of law**.

### 17. [The Karnataka-Maharashtra border row](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“The Karnataka-Maharashtra border row”** published in **The Hindu** on **30th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Issues and challenges pertaining federal structures

**Relevance**– Issues related to border disputes between states

**News**– The article explains the issues of Karnataka-Maharashtra border row.

**What has been the politics around the dispute?**

**No national party** is willing to take the risk and address the dispute.

This helped **Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES)** to sustain its fight. It has a single agenda of Belagavi's inclusion into Maharashtra.

The MES-supported candidates have been winning one or more seats in the district since the 1957 Karnataka Assembly election. They were defeated in the 2018 Assembly elections. The MES is keen to revive its **political fortunes** in the 2023 elections.

The dispute strongly resonates in the cultural arena too. Two Sahitya Sammelanas were held in Belagavi in 2000 and 2003, respectively. These were the **73rd Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelana (ABMSS)** and the **70th Akhil Bharatiya Kannada Sahitya Sammelana**. Both events prepared the ground for the re-opening of the issue.

**What is the recent controversy around Jath taluka?**

CM Basavaraj Bommai said the government was **“seriously considering”** laying a claim on Jath taluka.

In 2021, all 40 gram panchayats of the drought-prone Jath taluka **passed a resolution** to join Karnataka. It stated that the Maharashtra government was unable to provide water to its people and they were being treated unfairly.

Violence broke out at Dhound village in Maharashtra when some pro-Marathi activists vandalized KSRTC bus. In retaliation, pro-Kannada activists blackened the boards of an MSRTC bus in Kalaburagi district.

**For further reading**- [Karnataka Maharashtra Border Dispute](#)

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### 18. [Marriage rights of same-sex couples: A strong case exists for marriage equality](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**A strong case exists for marriage equality**” published in **The Hindu** on **31st December 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** Issues related to the marriage rights of same-sex couples.

**News:** A petition for marriage rights of same-sex couples under the **Special Marriage Act, 1954** is pending before the Supreme Court of India.

**What are the important aspects of LGBTQ community’s legal battle for their rights?**

An important legal aspect is whether the law criminalising sexual conduct has been violative of the **right to privacy or the right to equality**.

In the former, one’s **sexual orientation** was held **intrinsic to privacy and personal liberty**. In the latter, **equal treatment** of same-sex couples with those of heterosexual couples was considered paramount.

**The privacy approach** needs **non-interference by state** and equality approach requires the state to take **positive steps** to ensure equal treatment in all spheres of life.

If an **equality approach** is preferred, other rights like, prohibiting employment discrimination, rights in marriage, adoption should be considered for LGBTQ community.

**What is the practice followed in other countries on rights of LGBTQ community?**

The **European Court of Human Rights in 1981** struck down the offence of buggery in Northern Ireland as violative of **personal liberty**. It thus adopted a **privacy approach**.

Many European countries have not yet granted **marriage rights** to same-sex couples and only recognised civil partnerships.

In South Africa, the judiciary has compared the **privacy and equality approaches** in a case dealing with the decriminalisation of homosexuality. It has opined that the equality approach was **enabling** and granting greater protection to homosexual persons.

The constitutional court of Africa in one of its decisions has prohibited the state from interfering in the **right to marriage**.

The U.S. has decriminalised same-sex relations granted marriage equality under the **due process of law**. The focus was thus on **personal liberty**.

**What has been the approach followed by the Indian judiciary?**

India adopted the South African approach in **Navtej Singh case (2018)**. The top court decriminalised homosexuality. The court opined that **section 377** created an **unreasonable classification** for same-sex persons under Article 14. It is also violative of **bodily autonomy under Article 21**.

Further, sexual orientation implicated both **negative and positive obligations** on the state.

It called for a recognition of rights to ensure the true fulfilment of same-sex relationships. Even in NALSA judgement, the Court acknowledged the importance of **sequential rights** arising from ‘gender identity’.

**What is the way forward for marriage rights for same-sex couples?**

Strong **equality-based reasoning** provided by higher courts means that not providing marriage rights for same sex couples can not be justified.

**Marriage equality** for same-sex couples in India should not be left to the legislature. This would be significant in the Indian context where marriage holds a **special cultural and religious value**. Denial of marriage equality may reinforce the stigma faced by same-sex couples.

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### 19. India's global approach: 2023: The year India may realise its global power aspirations

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**2023: The year India may realise its global power aspirations**” published in **The Indian Express** on **31st December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**Relevance:** Foreign policy choices of Indian government

**News:** This article explains the Indian choice on important global issues. It also suggest the way forward for India to increase its global stature

In September 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked about making the US a principal partner “in the realisation of India’s rise as a responsible, influential world power”

**What has been India’s global approach to issues of global importance?**

Since its Independence, India has pushed for an agenda that **favoured the interests of developing or less developed countries**. India took a **principled stand** and stood up to the **policy domination** of the developed world. The examples are **GATT and NPT**.

India’s role as the protector of the interests of the developing world during WTO negotiations has been significant; For instance, India played a critical role in preventing developed countries from imposing their **trade and commercial agendas**.

**What has changed in India’s global approach recently?**

India stand up for the developing world and uphold its **strategic autonomy**, India started playing a **proactive role** in finding solutions. For example,

-The **Paris Climate Summit** in 2015 provided the first major opportunity for India to highlight its new priorities. It played a pivotal role in the climate deal while protecting the interests of the developing world.

India’s efforts resulted in developed countries agreeing to the principle of “**common and differentiated responsibility**”. India also convinced developed countries to agree to the formulation of INDCs.

-India’s global stature has increased because of its **constructive response** during the Covid pandemic. It supplied vaccines to many developing countries through its “**Vaccine Maitri**” programme. In the post-Covid world, India’s importance is growing. Its **post-Covid economic recovery** has been commendable.

-At the Bali G20 Summit, India played a crucial role in ensuring that both Russia and US can put their viewpoints. India conveyed to the Russian leadership that it was **not a time for war**. India has an opportunity to play a role in ending the war. It will determine its **future status**.

**What are the challenges to India’s global approach?**

Externally, China keeps the border tense. Domestically, the aggravation of **religious and political fault lines** for electoral or ideological reasons may impact the leadership’s ability to rise in global status.

**What should be the way forward for India’s global approach?**

India must not compromise on its **principled stand**. It must continue to act as the **voice of the Global South**. This can be done by **a) India’s diplomatic, strategic and political investments** in its neighbourhood and Asia, Africa and Latin America must increase, **b) India’s attention to the ASEAN and Indian Ocean neighbourhood must grow**. Its **Act East policy** needs more response, **c) It is important to revive the India-Africa Forum Summit**. India’s relations with countries in Latin America need more effort, **d) As G20 chair, India has the opportunity to set a new agenda**. In the past, it always worked for the **judicious sharing** of global public goods. It is time now to undertake similar efforts for **global digital and genetic goods**, and **e) India always upheld moralism** in global politics. India must bring that **moralist dimension** to new technological developments.



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### 20. [Regaining lost votes: Remote voting for migrants is a great idea](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Regaining lost votes: Remote voting for migrants is a great idea**” published in **The Times of India** on **31st December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2- Salient features of Representation of People Act

**Relevance:** Electoral reforms

**News:** The article explains the Election Commission’s move to extend voting rights to migrant workers through a customised EVM machine. Postal ballots facility is available to government employees. Since Covid, this facility is available to the elderly over 80.

**What is the rationale behind extending voting rights to migrant workers?**

The **2016-17 Economic Survey** estimated 6 crore migrant workers between 2001 and 2011. As per Census 2011, there were 45.6 crore migrants. It is nearly 40% of India’s population.

These are huge numbers. It suggests that a large number of Indian people are not exercising **voting rights**. For example, the 2020 Bihar and 2022 UP polls show it.

There were 40 lakhs more male electors than females in Bihar but just 3 lakhs more men voted than women. Similarly, male electors outnumbered females by 1.1 crores in UP, but just 45 lakhs more men voted than women.

What are the benefits of extending voting rights to migrant workers?

Voting rights ensure that **people’s voices** are heard in the political process. The exodus of over 1 crore migrant workers during the Covid lockdown hardly became an **electoral issue** anywhere. If migrants are allowed to vote, candidates will have to address their concerns. Hence, the decision to extend voting rights to migrant workers of the EC will deepen democracy.

### 21. [In the new evolving world, India needs a new vision](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**In the new evolving world, India needs a new vision**” published in **The Hindu** on **31st December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International Relations. GS3- Indian economy and development

**Relevance:** Developmental model for India in changing world order.

**News:** The article explains the changing world order and the reason behind Chinese aggressive behaviour. It also explains the steps needed to be taken for faster development in India.

**What are important changes happening across the world?**

The world was able to overcome the threat of COVID-19 due to vaccination efforts. Normalcy has been restored.

In the month of February, the world witnessed the **Russia-Ukraine war**. The retaliatory **economic sanctions and weaponization of trade** have triggered inflation, recession and gas shortage in winter.

The era of **innovative consumer technologies** from America and Europe, mass-produced in Taiwan, Korea and Japan, and consumed in China, Brazil and India, seems to be nearing its end.

America is now championing **trade restrictions** against its enemies. It is promoting **trading blocs** among its allies and incentivising domestic production through large financial assistance. The era of trusted free trade among nations seems to be over. **‘Economic nationalism’** is being promoted.

**What is the reason behind the aggressive behaviour of China in recent times?**

China’s advances into Indian territory are both **undeniable and unacceptable**. The timing and rationale of China’s military threat have a **larger motive** than just territorial gains.

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China has managed the **realignment of the world order** through the **strategic use of debt diplomacy, economic power and a 'common enemy' doctrine**. It marks a fundamental reshaping of global forces.

### **What is needed to counter Chinese aggression?**

Trade restrictions and economic sanctions against China by western powers will backfire. The counter to **Sino-centric world order** is an economically powerful India.

The strong manufacturing sector in India is the strongest response to China.

### **What should be the way forward for faster development of the Indian state?**

**Social front- Social harmony** is a necessary condition for India's rise as an economic power. Factories cannot afford to differentiate amongst people of multiple identities working together.

**Defence and foreign affairs-** There is a need to modernise and augment our defence capabilities with state-of-the-art weaponry. India should not continue with **conventional military purchase norms and processes**.

The established **foreign policy doctrine of non-alignment** may not be conducive to India's growing need for trade and market access in the **new economic world order**.

India needs a **bolder geo-economic strategy** to gain **preferential access** to unique technologies and capital from other nations in return for domestic market access.

**Political front-** India's political landscape will need reforms. Traditional tools of **welfare and governance** have not worked well and the gap between the rich and poor have widened further. India's **political governance model** needs greater **decentralisation and federalism reforms** to cater to widening divergence among States. The time has now come to move away from a **'one nation one policy'** mindset.

**Stronger institutions** are a necessary condition for greater **decentralisation**. Reforming public institutions with more powers, autonomy, resources and accountability is essential.

**Economic front-** India's economic road map will have to factor in **environmental concerns**. It needs to move away from the **monopolies model** of private enterprise and create a new **inclusive, employment-intensive** economic development model.

It is time to re-imagine India's overall strategy and re-evaluate our **normative policy framework**. We need a **holistic military, diplomatic, social and economic strategy**.

# General Studies Paper – 3

General Studies - 3

1. [India needs to increase its spending on research and development to become a global leader](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India needs to increase its spending on research and development to become a global leader**” published in **The Indian Express** on **26<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** measures required by India to become the world leader

**News:** India will be heading the G20 and it has a great opportunity to showcase itself as a global leader or a Vishwa guru.

**How can India become a world leader?**

India needs to have military as well as technological superiority like the US. The US is currently the world leader due to its investment in research and development (R&D).

India is also heading towards technological innovation with the launch of the Atal Innovation Mission (**AIM**). It aims to create an ecosystem to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.

However, India’s success depends on the amount being spent on R&D in relation to other G20 countries.

**How have G20 countries performed in R&D?**

Gross domestic expenditure on R&D (**GERD**) is the proposed measure to quantify a country’s commitment to R&D.

According to a report by **UNESCO**, the G20 nations accounted for **90.6 percent of global GERD in 2018**. Global R&D expenditure has increased with the increase in Research Intensity from 1.43 per cent in 1998 to 1.72 per cent in 2018.

Amongst the G20 countries, the **US is ahead with 36 percent** on R&D expenditure followed by the EU (20 percent), and China (18 per cent) but **India’s share is less than 1 percent of G20 R&D expenditure**.

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

India currently spends lots of money in subsidies through various schemes. Therefore, it needs to **repurpose its massive expenditures** on various subsidies towards research and innovation. Moreover, India needs to learn from **Israel, a non-G20 country** that has the highest research intensity (RI) of over 5 per cent.

The **government of Israel** has played an important role in financing and in providing well-functioning frameworks for innovation particularly in SMEs. The **innovation system in Israel** has led to its economic growth and competitiveness.

Israel has become an example for the nations that despite being a smaller nation, sustainable growth can be achieved by prioritising investments in R&D.

Therefore, India along with technological development needs innovations that can safeguard its basic environment — land, water, and air.

*Note: The percentage of expenditure on R&D of a country to their respective GDP provides the research intensity (RI). India is ranked 17th in the G20 with a RI of 0.65 per cent.*



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### 2. [Regulating Big Tech](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Regulating Big Tech**” published in the **Business Standard** on **26th December 2022**.

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

**Relevance**– Issues related to fair competition in market

**News**– The article explains the issues related to anti-competitive practices by big tech companies prevalent in digital markets.

The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance** has submitted a report. The report has provided a suggestion that new **digital competition regulations** be drafted to prevent Big Tech companies indulging in anti-competitive practices.

There is **rising global scrutiny** of Big Tech companies such as Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon, for their alleged abuse of market positions and misuse of user data.

The CCI is already in the process of setting up a special group, the **dedicated Digital Markets and Data Unit**, to monitor digital markets.

**What are the challenges related to anti-competitive practices in digital markets?**

Digital markets present special challenges as **market dominance** here can be exploited in ways different from the conventional business practices.

**Access** to these markets can be contained by blocking or charging huge commissions. It can also be done by enforcing **restrictive contracts** that prevent products from being sold via other channels.

The platform owner may also offer its own products. It sets up **conflicts of interests** and hurts competition. Discrimination between the display and treatment of own products versus those of competitors must be prevented. This is especially relevant with search engines and marketplaces. The **dominant platforms** garner lots of user data which they can analyse and exploit in many ways. The use of data must be carefully monitored.

The CCI has fined Google twice in separate cases this year. It is investigating Apple for its **in-app purchase system**. The Supreme Court has greenlighted the CCI's probe into WhatsApp's privacy policy, which relates to allegations that the messaging platform shares user data with its parent Facebook.

**What are the suggestions by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance for new digital competition regulations?**

The report suggests **ex-ante regulation**, which would be cautionary and based on anticipated changes.

There is a need to frame a definition for “**systemically important digital intermediaries**” or **SIDIs**. These are the businesses that require **tighter regulation**. Such a classification could be based on metrics like revenues, market capitalisation, and the number of active users.

It has suggested the CCI to induct **skilled experts** such as academics, and attorneys, to ensure it closely monitors SIDIs as well as emerging SIDIs.

SIDIs should submit an **annual compliance report** describing how they have fulfilled their obligations.

The committee has identified at least **10 such anti-competitive practices** that it wishes to curb. For example, it wants **anti-steering provisions** to prevent a website such as a search engine or marketplace from steering users to products or services offered by itself or a related entity.

The panel has also highlighted the need to curb **deep discounting of products, bundling and tying together of services**, and the need to prevent [Big Tech](#) using personal data for **targeted advertising**.

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**What is the way forward?** Encouraging competition and allowing the play of market forces is important. But **over-regulation** could also prevent innovation and growth. So, this is like **walking a tightrope**.

Moreover, the scope of the CCI to protect personal data and prevent its abuse is limited in the absence of a **personal data protection law**.

### 3. [Foundations for an Indian JETP](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Foundations for an Indian JETP**” published in the **Business Standard** on **26th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

**Relevance**– Issues related to clean energy in India

**News**– The article explains the issue of financing for energy transition in India.

**What are climate financing channels that are addressing the distinct problems of investability and investment in energy transition?**

The first is The **global environmental, social and governance or ESG phenomenon**. It has created ample cheap financing for clean energy. But it requires **investability** that is the foundation of a mature market economy in the energy sector.

The **Just Energy Transition Partnership, or JETP**, is the nascent second channel of climate financing. It is related to investability.

**What is the concept of climate justice?** It is the idea that **advanced economies** polluted the atmosphere. It is impacting the fortunes of poor countries getting to prosperity by doing similarly. Poor countries therefore say that developed markets must transfer resources to help fund their energy transition.

**What is investment and investability in the case of Indian energy transition?**

Investment is the business of private firms in **generation, storage, distribution, and transmission**. It adds up to a market-based electricity sector.

The firms that make decisions that are shaped by **prices and prospective profits**. Prices would fluctuate at all levels so as to clear supply and demand. It thus induces **energy transition** by both demand and supply sides.

Investability is existence of necessary conditions for investment

**What is the current scenario of financing for energy transition in India?**

**Climate financing** for investment is a largely solved problem. There is near-infinite resourcing from foreign capital in the form of **ESG investment**. This involves pensioners and insurance customers in Developed Markets. They get a **sub-market rate of return** for their investments in return for funding the Indian energy transition.

The ESG world is quite able to support the Indian energy transition. But, it is subjected to the limitations of present and future Indian **financial regulation, capital controls, tax policy and rule of law**.

Our foundational problem is that we have an electricity sector that operates through **state control** instead of one which operates through the **price system**.

A **one-time expenditure** of substantial sums of money is to solve the policy problems and to get up to **investability** for boundless investment.

**JETP** is the mechanism for this aid.

**What is the way forward for the JETP mechanism in India?**

India should keep the investment problem aside. Indian financial firms are well plugged into **global ESG circles** and able to access global private capital into Indian private electricity investment. The focus of an Indian JETP should be upon **investability**.

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We should emphasise four principles-

- India is a diverse sub-continent. It is comparable with the EU in its **heterogeneity**. The **optimal strategy** for electricity sector reforms is quite different across the different states.

The JETP engagement should be with one state at a time. It should **prioritise** exporting states such as Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu that will face the brunt of **carbon taxation** in their export destinations.

- JETP should be seen as a **financing component of the reforms programme** that achieves an electricity sector grounded in the price system. **External resourcing** is a necessary but not sufficient condition for this reforms programme. Three sources of money can play an important role in financing this reform programme: Budgetary resources, the proceeds from government exit, and aid from rich countries.
- Discussions around donor and government money should focus only on money that supports this **reforms programme**, not private ESG money.
- The climate community looks for the date by which a state electricity sector will be free of fossil fuels. But the **“climate policy transmission mechanism”** runs through the **price system**. The precondition for **net zero** is thus the date by which a state electricity sector is investable in the eyes of private persons.

#### 4. [Forest rights and heritage conservation](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“Forest rights and heritage conservation”** published in **The Hindu** on **26th December 2022**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Environment conservation

**Relevance**– Issues related to protected areas

**News**– The article explains the issues of rights of people in protected areas in Karnataka. It also explains the status of implementation of the Forest Right Act, 2006.

39 areas were declared by UNESCO in 2012 as being critical for biodiversity in the Western Ghats. 10 are in Karnataka.

#### **What is the status of implementation of the Forest Right Act?**

The majority of the forest dwellers claimed land that is not more than one acre.

The **rejection rate** of the other traditional forest dwellers was two times more than the STs.

In the case of the STs, the reasons were attributed to fresh encroachments; claimed lands being on wasteland and forest lands that are not protected or revenue lands. There were **multiple applications** made in a single family.

In the case of other traditional forest dwellers, it was mainly failure to produce **evidence of dependency and dwelling** on forest land for 75 years.

#### **What are the challenges faced by the people in the villages falling under eco-sensitive zones?**

They face severe restrictions on their entry into the forest. Development activities like road repair have been stopped.

Farming is not allowed in a normal way. The use of fertilizers is banned.

The people are prohibited from cutting trees falling on their houses to undertake repair work.

These restrictions were in enforcement after these areas were declared as protected areas and not necessarily after their declaration as world heritage sites.

The **increasing animal insurgency** is causing damage to the crops of the farming forest dwellers. They are not given **compensation** for the loss if they do not have recognition of their land.



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Livestock rearing in the villages close to forests is more challenging than in **regular revenue villages**. If irrigation projects come up, the grazing lands have been taken over by the government to compensate for the forest land lost to such projects.

### **What is the current status of rights of traditional forest dwellers?**

The respondents were in possession of the lands claimed under the FRA even though their applications were either **rejected or were still pending**.

There were concerns that people were accepting the **resettlement packages** and moving out of **'protected areas'** for good. If half the village population moved away, living a normal life will be difficult for the remaining population.

People are still deprived of **basic facilities** and other government benefits extended under various schemes and programmes. They don't possess the records of land that is required to avail these benefits.

The issue becomes complicated when the people refuse to **relocate** on grounds of their attachment to the land. They are feared about extinction of their **culture and religious roots**. The gram sabha has to decide the proposed resettlement as it has to give **'free informed consent'**. However, this does not happen.

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

The government must bring **more clarity** to the Act. It should be done to **avoid conflicts** between the government agencies **conserving biodiversity** and the traditional forest dwellers.

The **conservation of biodiversity** requires special attention. Yet, forest dwellers willing to live in the forest must be allowed to stay.

Those wanting to experience the fruits of development must be relocated according to their choices. They should be given a **suitable package**. This can be possible only when the areas are declared as protected after **consultations** with the local population.

### 5. [A warship programme that must go full steam ahead](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"A warship programme that must go full steam ahead"** published in **The Hindu** on **27th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Security

**Relevance-** Defence manufacturing

**News:** The article explains the issue of the development of aircraft carriers by the Indian navy.

#### **How can India classify aircraft carriers?**

In terms of size, aircraft carriers can be classified as **light, medium and super-carriers**. Light carriers can carry up to 25 aircraft, medium-sized around 30 to 50 aircraft, while the super-carriers can carry over 90 aircraft.

In terms of role, they can be categorised as **fleet, escort, air defence, amphibious assault and anti-submarine warfare carriers**.

In terms of the methodology used to launch and recover aircraft, they can be categorised as **Catapult Assisted Take-Off But Arrested Recovery (CATOBAR), Short Take-off But Arrested Recovery (STOBAR), and vertical/short take-off and landing (V/STOL)** carriers.

#### **What are some facts about aircraft carriers in India?**

India's first aircraft carrier, **INS Vikrant** was a **light carrier** designed for fleet air defence. It could carry between 21 to 23 aircraft.

Its replacement, **INS Viraat** was a **light fleet air defence carrier**. It has an air wing of 26 to 30 aircraft and helicopters.

**INS Vikramaditya** is a 45,000 **tonnes medium-sized aircraft carrier**. It is capable of both fleet air defence and land attack. It can carry up to 30 aircraft and helicopters.



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**IAC-1** is almost similar in size, classification, role and capability to **INS Vikramaditya**.

**What is the near-term plan of the Indian navy?**

IAC has demonstrated **India's capability** to design and build the largest and most complex of warships. Few countries have this capability.

The planning for IAC-I began in the **mid-1980s**. The ship was commissioned in September 2022. This time period can be shortened if the next carrier is a **repeat order**.

The first four carriers had **smaller and relatively less capable air wings**, as compared to other advanced navies. So, the Indian Navy envisaged a **50,000 tonnes-65,000 tonnes aircraft carrier**.

Due to financial constraints, the Indian navy has decided to shelve this plan. It is considering a **repeat order of IAC-1**.

**Why repeat order is the optimal strategy for the Indian navy?**

It would ensure that **infrastructure, design capability and expertise** built through **extensive investment and effort** are utilised in a proper way.

It will help in achieving the goal of having **three aircraft carriers**. **First Naval Plan Papers in 1948** stipulated the need for three aircraft carriers for the Indian Navy.

**Similar design and configuration** of the two aircraft carriers would also make their **operation and maintenance** easier.

**What should be the future strategy for the Indian navy?**

In the long term, India should not avoid **Chinese capability**.

China's first two aircraft carriers displace over **65,000 tonnes**. Its third indigenously built carrier displaces 85,000 tonnes. It has a possible air wing of 60-odd aircraft.

China has future plans for a **seven-ship carrier force**. It includes ambitions to build **nuclear-powered supercarriers** of over 1,00,000 tonnes of displacement.

### 6. [Inflation and agency accountability](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Inflation and agency accountability**" published in the **Business Standard** on **27th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian economy

**Relevance:** Issues related to the concept of inflation

**News:** The article explains the issues related to the inflation-targeting regime in India. It explains the creation of the concept of inflation targeting across the world.

**How have the concepts of inflation targeting and central bank independence developed?**

Fiat money was invented many centuries ago. It was made by the Central Banks. Despite having many advantages, fiat money and Central Banks faced many issues.

It led to the creation of the thinking that Central Banks should be **independent agencies**. It should focus on delivering **low, stable and predictable inflation**.

**Inflation targeting and central bank independence** generally worked well. It rapidly spread from one country to the next.

There is by now enough evidence that economic performance in a country improves after this reform is implemented.

**What led to the formation of the Monetary Policy Committee in India?**

Many committees like **Committee on Financial Sector Reforms, 2009** and **Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission, 2013, chaired by B N Srikrishna** suggested an inflation-targeting regime.

In 2014, **Urjit Patel Committee** endorsed the idea of inflation targeting and the statutory Monetary Policy Committee.

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The formal announcement on this was made in the first budget speech of the new government in 2014. The **Monetary Policy Framework Agreement** was signed in February 2015.

In September 2016, Parliament amended the **RBI Act of 1934** for creating a statutory MPC for maintaining **price stability**.

### **How has it worked for the Indian economy?**

Due to limitations of the **Indian financial system**, inflation targeting would have worked poorly. There are important weaknesses in the **Indian bond market** and banking sector. The **bond-currency-derivatives nexus** is missing. The **monetary policy transmission** is therefore weak. Hence, RBI can not deliver on a **precise inflation target** like developed countries. Instead, the RBI was given a wide goalpost. It was delivering inflation in the **range from 2 to 6%**.

For some years, this worked well and India achieved **price stability**. In recent years, though, there are concerns that inflation has regularly **surpassed 6%**.

### **What is the way forward for the inflation-targeting regime?**

Theoretically, there are **four possibilities** through which a central bank can fail on its target. These are wrong statistics, wrong forecasts, wrong decisions of MPC, and bad transmission of monetary policy.

Every time there is a failure in achieving the inflation target, India needs to analyse the cause of the failure. Once the cause is found out, we must undertake **remedial action**.

This is the task of Parliament. It must review its contract with the RBI and **modify the contract** in ways that will ensure better performance by the agent.

It would be useful to have a **public release of the RBI's self-assessment** of its failure and its own views on the required remedial measures. The document should be released in the **public domain**.

In addition to the RBI report, the models and data and slideshows used in the MPC meeting should be released.

Each MPC member should be obliged to write and sign a **1000-word rationale statement** that explains her voting decision. It will lead to greater **individual accountability** of MPC members for their voting decision.

### 7. [Gear up wisely to clamp down on important digital intermediaries](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Gear up wisely to clamp down on important digital intermediaries”** published in the **mint** on **27th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian economy

**Relevance:** Issue related to fair competition in market.

**News:** The article explains the Parliamentary Committee report on anti-competitive practices by big tech companies prevalent in digital markets.

Recently, the Standing Committee on Finance tabled its report on **“anti-competitive practices by Big Tech companies”**.

### **What are the recommendations of the Parliamentary Panel?**

It has recommended the introduction of **“Digital Competition Act”**. It would ensure a fair and transparent digital ecosystem in India.

**Dedicated “digital market units”** should be set up at CCI. It should be staffed with skilled experts to handle issues related to digital markets.

Any **merger or acquisition involving them** must be notified to CCI. There is no minimum threshold or local nexus requirement to keep out deals that do not have a substantial impact on competition.

It has emphasised the need for **globally harmonised regulations** that govern digital markets.

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A consistent theme of the report is the **exceptional growth** of the digital economy in India and its bright forecast.

### What is the way forward to ensure fair competition?

Some level of **state intervention** may be reasonable to ensure **fair competition** and the successful coexistence of smaller players. But, a fine balance needs to be struck between the **need to regulate and the freedom to innovate**.

India must focus on developing the concept of **voluntary and informed concept** and make it compatible with the use of **Big Data**.

**Must read:** [Regulating Big Tech](#)

### 8. [No free lunches – The free food scheme is driven by electoral considerations, but its long-term fiscal risks outweigh the short-term gains](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**No free lunches – The free food scheme is driven by electoral considerations, but its long-term fiscal risks outweigh the short-term gains**” published in **Business Standard** on **28<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Food Security**

**Relevance:** decision of government on NFSA

**News:** The government has decided to allow free food grain supplies under the National Food Security Act (**NFSA**) until December 2023. The government is being criticized for this decision.

#### What are the concerns?

The government instead of reducing the food subsidy bill has made it free under NFSA. It would act as a **fiscal burden on the government**.

This might also encourage political parties ruling in many of the states to come up with similar schemes and bring fiscal burden on itself.

Therefore, it will have a **negative fiscal consequence both on Centre and the states** even after discontinuing Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (**PM-GKAY**). However, it would benefit the Finance Ministry.

#### How would the Finance Ministry be benefitted?

The launch of PM-GKAY in April 2020 acted as a burden and affected the expenditure planning for the Union Finance Ministry. The scheme kept on extending till December 2022.

Since the PM-GKAY has been discontinued now, it is expected that it would provide the finance ministry a **food subsidy saving** equivalent to about **0.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP)**.

If taken together with the **fertiliser subsidy saving** which is estimated at about 0.3 percent of GDP, the finance ministry will have a total savings of **about 0.7 per cent of GDP in 2023-24**.

This will provide flexibility to the Finance Ministry in **increasing capital expenditure**.

Further, subsuming the PM-GKAY into the NFSA will also provide **budgetary advantage** for the next fiscal year. It is unlike the previous budgets where the government took decisions on the PM-GKAY after the Budget was decided.

Moreover, the PM-GKAY being discontinued, now the government will only have to focus on bringing NFSA under the central issue price regime. However, it is unexpected that it will come under it before the next Lok Sabha election.



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### 9. [Input cost pressure – on increasing milk prices](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “Input cost pressure” published in Business Standard on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 3- Industries and industrial policies

**News:** The dairy sector in the National Capital Region of Delhi is experiencing difficulties due to a short supply and high cost of cattle feed and fodder.

Cattle feed prices have reportedly increased by 28%, leading to the highest level of wholesale price-based fodder inflation since 2013.

This short supply has resulted in multiple price increases for milk by major dairy companies. The main thing to note is that it is happening during a post-monsoon flush season. In this season milk supplies typically exceed demand, allowing dairy firms to build up stocks.

It has increased the milk procurement cost of dairies by 24%.

#### **What are the reasons behind high cost of cattle feed?**

**Climate change:** Intense heat and other climate change-induced stresses on feed-worthy farm produce

**Alternative uses:** The use of damaged and substandard grains for other products like ethanol and starch, instead of feeding them to cattle.

**Shrinking natural pastures:** Disappearance or shrinkage of natural pastures and common grazing grounds due to encroachment.

The area under cultivated fodder crops has remained stagnant at just around 4 per cent of the total cropland for decades. It is despite several fold increase in the cattle population.

**Plant varieties:** The replacement of traditional tall crop varieties with dwarf high-yielding ones has lowered the availability of plant stalks and other residual biomass for use as dry fodder.

#### **What are the course of action?**

Better **management of grazing grounds.**

**Incentivising growing of nutritious forage grasses** and trees under agro-pastoral and horti-pastoral systems of cultivation.

**Setting up fodder banks** to preserve the surplus green vegetation available during the monsoon season.

### 10. [Securing homeland: India must upgrade counterintelligence as its geopolitical environment becomes complex](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Securing homeland: India must upgrade counterintelligence as its geopolitical environment becomes complex**” published in **The Times of India** on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Security challenges and their management.

**Relevance:** About counterintelligence capabilities.

**News:** Recently, a Russian businessman-politician, a known critic of Putin, and his friend died in Odisha under mysterious circumstances. This should alert India’s intelligence and security apparatus.

About foreign country operations in other countries

Various intelligence agencies occasionally target individuals in other countries. Americans call this an **extreme rendition.**

The developed countries try to raise the cost of such back operations by foreign agencies through superior counterintelligence.



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How vulnerable India is to foreign operations in India?

The increase in India's strategic profile makes it a key player in geopolitical issues. From the Ukraine conflict to the Taiwan Strait tensions, there is a danger of foreign agents bringing their battles to India.

**Past instances:** When Israel and Iran were reportedly targeting each other's diplomats and scientists through covert operations on foreign soil, India also witnessed an attack on New Delhi.

**Present threats:** China has been setting up secret police stations in other countries to coerce or intimidate Chinese nationals. Apparently, more than 100 such overseas Chinese police stations have been established in countries such as the Netherlands, Ireland, South Korea, Japan, Germany and the US among others. The same modus operandi could be used by China in India too,

How India can improve India's intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities?

So far, India's security apparatus has been largely geared towards fighting and preventing terrorism. **a)** India should prepare for far more sophisticated threats, **b)** India must have well-resourced, highly trained espiocrats (a professional spy), and **c)** India should upgrade its counterintelligence.

### 11. [Raise capital formation: Never let demand down](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Raise capital formation: Never let demand down**" published in the **Livemint** on **29th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian economy and growth.

**Relevance:** Issues related to economic growth.

**News:** The article explains the reasons behind lower GDP growth in pre-pandemic years. It also explains the current economic scenario.

**What are the viewpoints of the current Chief Economic Advisor about the economy?**

GST and demonetisation were not responsible for the pre-pandemic **economic slowdown**. It was financial sector stress that slowed **capital formation**.

Less credit in supply and demand lowered GDP growth. The **double balance sheet crisis** was responsible for this stress.

**Structural reforms** by the government will yield results. Economic policy or reforms will have an impact, provided everything else remains constant. When other things change, their short-term impacts overshadow reforms.

**Why was capital formation one of the major reasons for the pre-pandemic economic slowdown?**

**Capital formation** has been a weak link in India's economy in recent decades. It was at its peak rate of 40% during the 2008-09 global recession. The annual rate of investment has fallen to a level of 10% lower. This has led to **slower output growth and weak job creation**.

**What is the economic situation now?**

**Bank stress** is easing now. NPA was at a peak of 11.6% in 2018. It has fallen to a level of 5%. Today the capital looks adequate. **Credit growth** has reached its highest level in 10 years.

The weak point is **lower consumption expenditure**. Demonetisation and **complexity of the GST regime** have impacted informal and small businesses. It has impacted the **livelihoods** of the people.

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### 12. [Mineral-intensive growth would need the country to ease mining](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Mineral-intensive growth would need the country to ease mining**” published in the **mint** on **29th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Industrial policy. GS1- Economic geography

**Relevance:** Important minerals for economy

**News:** The article explains the issues faced by the mining sector in India. It also explains the reasons for the increasing demand for minerals in India in upcoming times

**Why will the demand for minerals increase in the upcoming times?**

The Indian government is focussing on **electric vehicles**. These vehicles require six times more minerals than conventional cars. As a result of this; the demand for lithium, cobalt, nickel, and graphite alongside iron and bauxite will be enormous.

**PLI schemes** for advanced chemistry cell batteries, solar PV modules, white goods and electronics manufacturing are expected to increase demand for **energy-transition minerals**.

India has set the target of 500 GW of **non-fossil fuel energy** capacity. It will be largely met by wind and solar energy. As per **IEA**, onshore winds require nine times more minerals than a gas-fired power plant and solar PV panels require thrice more minerals than coal-fired power plants. India aspires to be the **electronics hub** of the world. Minerals will play a crucial role in achieving it. 13 minerals are used in a mobile handset.

**Traditional sectors** like housing, infrastructure and transportation also require minerals.

**What are the issues faced by the mining sector in India?**

The Indian mining industry still faces **regulatory hurdles** that restrain the growth of mineral production. India’s **expenditure on exploration** particularly for deep-seated minerals like copper, zinc and gold has been abysmally low.

Indian law does not let a **mining lease** beyond 10 sq km for a mineral in a state.

Minerals like iron ore and bauxite also face the problem of **double taxation in form of royalty on royalty**.

There is also **differential treatment** across minerals for calculating the **Auction Sale Price(ASP)**. The ASP of bauxite is 3–4 times the actual market price. It hinders large-scale auctions of bauxite.

**What is the way forward for improving the condition of the mining sector?**

To encourage exploration, there is a need to shift the current “**revenue maximising**” model to an “**exploration investment incentivising**” model.

In the auction regime, area restrictions on mining leases should be removed.

The law must exclude royalty and other charges from the sale value to determine the **Auction Sale Price(ASP)**. **ASP determination** for all minerals should be uniform.

**Private participation** in the mining of critical minerals that have important non-atomic use like lithium should be allowed. Such non-fissile minerals should be excluded from Part B of the first schedule of the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957**.

### 13. [Speed and capacity – Restoring trust in IBC must be a priority](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Speed and capacity – Restoring trust in IBC must be a priority**” published in **Business Standard** on **29th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy

**Relevance:** concerns associated with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

**News:** The Reserve Bank of India has released the “Trend and Progress in Banking Report for 2021-22”. It highlights the performance of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

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### What is IBC?

[Click here to Read](#)

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

As per the report, **recovery rates were not higher** than those achieved under the SARFAESI (Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest) Act or the debt recovery tribunals.

However, it also highlighted that IBC has achieved remarkable results in **liquidation value of the assets** in the bankruptcy system till the second quarter of 2022-23.

The report further said that the **reasons behind low liquidation value** might be because the entities entering the IBC have already undergone significant **value destruction of asset holdings**.

This highlights the concerns and overall effectiveness of the IBC.

### What are the concerns with the IBC?

The idea of the IBC was to provide a **swift resolution**. This would have helped financial creditors looking to preserve the value of their assets to move swiftly into the process before making value destruction of assets.

However, **understaffing**, particularly, in the National Company Law Tribunal (**NCLT**) has caused delays within the IBC.

Understaffing has led many banks towards **handing stressed assets** that could have been recovered by the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (NARCL).

The current time for resolution is around 680 days compared to 230 days in 2017-18 when the IBC was new. **Almost two-thirds of the cases** have gone beyond the mandated nine months.

Therefore, the government has failed to adequately highlight, capitalise and invest in its own major reform which has caused it to underperform.

### What can be the way ahead?

Even though the government has stated that it does not have any plans to bring reforms to IBC to speed up the resolution process, it has to ensure that the IBC returns to time-bound performance.

### 14. [Global arms sales: Change is underway](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Global arms sales: Change is underway**” published in **Business Standard** on **29th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Defence

**Relevance:** Increasing arms sales of China and India

**News:** There has been an increase in arms sales from countries in the Asia-Oceania region in 2021. This article discusses the shifting pattern of countries and a comparison between India and China in arms sales.

### How have Asia-Oceania countries performed in arms sales?

Arms sales from **Asia and Oceania increased by 5.8%** surpassing weapons sales from Europe. The **United States still remains ahead of all the major arms-producing countries and regions**. However, China has also seen an increase in its weapons sales in 2021.

**China alone accounted for over 80 percent of the weapons sales** in the Asia-Oceania region in 2021. **Japan was second with South Korea ranked third and India fourth**.

### What are the reasons behind the increasing Chinese arms sales?

**Self-reliance in defence technology:** China invested in its defence technology early in the 1950s due to which it is now seeing its benefit and growth.



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**The merger of key industries:** China merged its Shipbuilding Industry Corporation and China State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC) into a single entity. This helped consolidation in the Chinese defence industry.

Other reasons are investments in weapons research and development, reverse engineering, etc.

### **How has India performed in arms sales?**

India also saw improvements in its arms sales in 2021.

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (**HAL**) and Bharat Electronics Limited (**BEL**) saw an increase in their arms sales by 6.7% and 20% respectively. However, India lags behind China in arms sales.

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

India can either move towards a **fully-privatised defence industry** like that of the US or towards a **defence industrial complex** like China.

Further, the government could break up the two state-run monopolies (HAL and BEL) to boost productivity and competitiveness and consolidate them under a single entity like that of China.

### 15. [Leveraging voice technology to combat cyber-fraud](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Leveraging voice technology to combat cyber-fraud**” published in **The Hindu** on **30th December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Basics of cyber security

**Relevance**– Use of biometrics for security

**News**– The article explains the use of Voice Technology for improving cybersecurity

#### **What is the status of bank and cyber frauds in India?**

Bank and cyber frauds in India are on the rise. According to data by the **RBI**, frauds have cost the country an estimated ₹100 crore a day over the last 7 years.

The frauds reported in 2021-22 were 23.69% higher than in the previous year, although there was a decline in the amount involved.

#### **What is Voice Technology?**

It encompasses voice biometrics or **voice/speech recognition technology**. It is one of the best ways to improve cybersecurity through the use of **voice biometrics**.

It uses the unique characteristics of a **person's voice as identification**. The technology creates a **digital voiceprint** and compares it to a caller's voice.

#### **Why is it beneficial as compared to other biometrics?**

Voice authentication can significantly improve security over **knowledge-based authentication methods**. Compared to other biometrics, voice use is the **cheapest technology**. It does not require a reader or special device. It is also **non-invasive, portable** and affords **remote identification**.

Banks have traditionally relied on the use of **passwords**. But, these are the **weakest links** in security. Unlike a password, a customer's voice is impossible to copy. It is far more challenging to hack.

VT verifies a caller in a very short time by analysing the caller's voice and flags suspicious calls. VT allows **privacy** because it does not require users to reveal personal information.

The technology is sensitive enough to detect if someone is **impersonating** the user or playing a recording. It can identify even if the user has a cold or a sore throat.

#### **What are the potential uses of Voice Technology?**

The voice biometrics industry is growing exponentially now. Experts expect the market to reach a market size of \$3.9 billion by 2026, with a compound annual growth rate of 22.8%.

Voice biometrics can help **financial institutions** to ensure higher levels of protection for customers and employees. In February 2019, **HSBC** became the first bank to introduce voice



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recognition for mobile banking customers. As a result, telephone banking fraud cases fell by over 50%.

Voice Technology is an essential tool for **forensics and law enforcement**. The police can leverage voice to improve **investigation efficiency, identify criminals, track criminals, and better respond to crimes**.

Voice is finding use in **airport security** to check criminal background. Voice has a much lower error rate, and requires no eye contact.

VT has the advantage of improving user experience, reducing call handle times and call centre costs. It ensures **high-accuracy authentication** in seconds.

Voice could be an excellent tool for the Government to disburse money for various schemes and verify the proof of life of pensioners from their homes.

### **What are downsides of this technology?**

The technology may not be **100% foolproof**. It may give false positives, and has an accuracy between 90% and 99%.

But some recent systems which come with voice analytics of gender and age identification, claim 100% verification accuracy.

### **What needs to be done by the government?**

The Government needs to develop a mechanism for **proper coordination** between financial institutions and the police to investigate and prosecute fraudsters.

It needs to maintain an **extensive database** of such criminals.

## 16. [Dumping ground – India is a key importer of hazardous waste](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Dumping ground – India is a key importer of hazardous waste**” published in **Business Standard** on **30<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Environment**

**Relevance:** concerns with waste disposal in India

**News:** The article discusses the impact of waste imports in India and problems with their inadequate regulation.

### **What is the current situation?**

A report by Bloomberg states that Muzaffarnagar in the U.P. is a major dumping ground for plastic waste from the US.

These **plastic wastes are used by the paper mills** in substitute to wood pulp as a **cheaper raw material**. The **law also permits up to 2 percent contamination** in recycled paper. However, this law is being misused by the mills.

Further, some materials that can be recycled are given to mills and others are **sold as fuel to sugar and paper mills**.

**The boilers and furnaces of these mills are not hot enough to fully incinerate this waste leading to toxic emissions**. Therefore, the residents of Muzaffarnagar inhale ash filled air with microplastics on a regular basis.

Another highlight of the report was the problem with domestic as well as **imported e-waste**. As per a **UN report**, up to 90 percent of the world’s electronic waste is deposited in India.

Some of the e-wastes are recycled and rests are burnt leading to the **contamination of the air**. This is happening even though the government banned the import of **e-waste under rules notified in 2016**.

These wastes provide a source of livelihood to ragpickers, unlicensed contractors, raddiwalas, etc. but they also get exposed to health hazards caused by it.

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

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There is a need to properly **enforce the laws** and provide **a monitoring mechanism** against this practice. However, concerns of recycling companies and the livelihood of rag pickers should also be kept in mind.

### 17. [Strengthening cybersecurity – Govt must address vulnerabilities](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Strengthening cybersecurity – Govt must address vulnerabilities**” published in **Business Standard** and “**Ring Fencing Data – Ransomware attacks are rising fast. India needs to be ready. And the data bill must factor this in**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **30<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Cyber Security

**Relevance:** concerns with cyber-attacks on India

**News:** There has been an increase in the cyber-attacks in India which is a concern over the security of online data of citizens.

#### **What is the present situation?**

According to a report by CERT-In (**India Ransomware Report**), there has been a 51% year-on-year increase in ransomware incidents. A majority of attacks are on data centers.

**Large databases of personal data are sold regularly.** There have been lots of data **breaches and leaks on smaller scales** across multiple sectors. **India has turned into a major hub for global cybercrime.**

This has emerged as a **public security challenge** as India is moving towards a digital operating system for its social and economic activities.

The most serious problem comes from **organized cyberattacks** on large data repositories and critical public infrastructure such as AIIMS.

This problem has also become **global in nature**. **For example**, last year Ireland was forced to shut down its public healthcare service for a while due to the ransomware attack.

Moreover, **India is the cheapest place** in the world in terms of data tariff. It is also the nation **with the highest per capita data consumption** which allows it to generate a huge amount of data.

The data generation is **likely to rise further** after the launch of 5G and satellite broadband.

Digital platforms such as the **Digital India initiative, the Unified Payments Interface and the Open Network for Digital Commerce** have all caused an increase of the data online.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to look into the issue and prevent citizen’s data.

#### **What can be the way ahead?**

**First**, a **personal data protection law** needs to be implemented at the earliest. It should – **a)** offer the citizens both **adequate protection** and the chance of **recompense for damaging data leaks**, **b) limit the data collection by all regulated entities**, especially the biometrics because the government organizations who collect it may not all have high standards of cybersecurity, **c) limit the discretion enjoyed by the regulated entities** in deciding the time to inform the victims of the data breaches.

**Second, awareness programs** by agencies like the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (**CERT-In**) should be made for individuals, government, and businesses.

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### 18. [Free distribution of food grains: Sobering year end reality](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Sobering year end reality” published in **Business Standard** on **31st December 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Food Security

**Relevance:** Concerns with the free distribution of food grains.

**News:** The government has recently allowed free food grains under NFSA till December 2023 and discontinued PMGKAY. This article discusses the impact of the decision of providing free food grains.

#### **What are the issues with free distribution of food grains?**

The government already provides subsidised food grains under NFSA but making it free will **a) Add more fiscal burden on the government, b) States** that were offering free grain **will save money** because the Centre is now paying the full amount.

Central subsidies on food, fertiliser, and petroleum together account for **2.5 percent of GDP**. Moreover, there are many other major concerns that government needs to address than just distributing free food grains.

#### **What are the other worrying concerns?**

**The issue with Farming:** Farmers are provided with subsidized fertiliser, electricity along with MSP. But, **a) very little incentive is provided for efficiency** in using these scarce or costly inputs, **b) Many crops have productivity below international levels** and **wholesale subsidies are not enough** for the agricultural sector, **c) Agriculture provides half of the job** in the country but wages are very low.

**Issues with Income levels:** Around **94% of the workers** who have registered on the government’s **e-shram portal report monthly incomes of under Rs 10,000. Only 1.5 percent have** reported wages above Rs 15,000.

**Informal-sector workers account for about 80 percent of the total working population.** Out of these, **two-thirds are engaged in agriculture** getting low wages. **Inflation-adjusted farm wages** have also fallen in the past five years.

The data on consumption habits and the purchases of consumer durables suggest a **broadening middle-class category**.

Therefore, these are major concerns in front of the government and providing free food grains will not bring much change. Instead, it will lead to political competition in providing freebies.

#### **What measures can be adopted by the government?**

**a) Bringing up more manufacturing and services-sector work** is required so that fewer people depend on agriculture. **b) Programmes like the employment guarantee scheme** should be provided along with **investments in public health care, school education, and job-oriented training**.