



9 PM

Compilation

December 2022

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General

Studies

Paper – 1

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General Studies - 1

1. [Why and how the Supreme Court should recognise same-sex marriage](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “[Why and how the Supreme Court should recognise same-sex marriage](#)” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS1- Social empowerment. GS2- Vulnerable sections

Relevance– Issues related to LGBT

News– The article explains the issue of same-sex marriages.

Recently petitions were filed in higher courts of country for legal recognition of same sex marriages .

What are legal issues with same sex marriages in India?

The Special Marriage Act, 1954 under Section 4 lays down the conditions relating to solemnization of special marriages. It lays down the condition that male has completed the age of 21 years and female the age of 18 years.

Throughout the legislation, there are references to “**husband**” and “**wife**” in provisions relating to marriage.

If same-sex marriages are to be recognized under SMA, then the SC would need to interpret in every reference to husband and wife under the present statute the word “**spouse**”.

What is the case of South Africa regarding the same subject?

The **constitutional court of Africa** did the same thing in 2005.

It held that same sex couples should be enabled to enjoy the status and benefits that is given to **heterosexual couples**.

What are other provisions of law that need to be corrected for same-sex marriages?

Section 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 of SMA mandates a notice of intended marriage publicly, the **filing of objections** by any parties who may object to any marriage, and the decision making by the marriage officer on such objections.

These sections are used by families of couples to prohibit **inter-caste marriage**. It will also be used against the **same-sex marriages**.

There is a need for seeking the deletion of these sections.

2. [India@75, Looking at 100: A country capable of diversity sans discrimination](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “[India@75, Looking at 100: A country capable of diversity sans discrimination](#)” published in **The Indian Express** on **8th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS1- Indian culture

Relevance– India spiritual heritage

News– The article explains the rich heritage of Bhakti tradition in India and its significance for our country.

Why do we need to celebrate Bhakti poets?

They are upstarter and not followers of a particular belief. They hail from varied caste, class, gender, language and sectarian backgrounds. It reminds us of the plural aspects of our spiritual heritage.

They remind us of the power of the **reclaimed heart and the examined life**. They are aware that all darkness can be transformed by the act of **acknowledgement and inclusion**. This makes them inspirational for any culture seeking to heal its wounds and move forward, without getting carried away by rage or recrimination.

They remind us that we are **dual citizens** of earth and sky, body and mind, the immanent and the transcendent. The path to **wholeness** is in **integration**.

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Above all, these poets remind us that **dissent is never disloyalty**. They are not obedient worshippers. They question every **hierarchy**.

The Bhakti poets quarrel with their gods, swear at them, make love to them, and dispense with them. Nothing is taboo and nothing **sacrilegious**. The underlying premise is simple: The self and the other cannot be kept apart.

Bhaktas anger is controlled by love, not ridicule. Even while they disagree with their gods, they never stop loving them. In a world prone to despise those with whom we disagree, these poets offer a different vision. **Intimacy** is the basis of their vision. For them, **critique is never contempt**.

What is the case for our country?

India is a living **civilisational legacy**. Its **spiritual traditions** are alive and well. Its **holistic healing systems and traditional arts** remain vibrant. Its capacity to honour the divine feminine endures. It has a rich **linguistic and cultural diversity**.

It offers the world its vibrant template of **spiritual freedom and cultural democracy**.

There is the need to stop the model of **unity into an uniformity**.

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

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

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

Relevance– Census and its correlation with standards of living.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is revealed by the population of India after 1947?

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

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

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

4. [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.

5. [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?

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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.

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**.

6. [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**.

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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 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.

7. [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**.

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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.

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. [Cap Doesn't Fit – A price ceiling on Russia's oil exports unlikely to work. India should act in its national interest](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Cap Doesn't Fit – A price ceiling on Russia's oil exports unlikely to work. India should act in its national interest**” published in **The Times of India** on **5th November 2022**.

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

Relevance: About the recent sanctions on Russian oil.

News: Recently, G7 plus Australia imposed a price cap of \$60 a barrel on seaborne export of Russian crude oil. This is an effort to squeeze the country's revenue and thereby undermine Russia's warfighting capabilities.

About the price cap and its impact on Russia's warfighting capabilities

The price cap represents a 30% discount to the price of the benchmark Brent crude.

The 'price cap coalition' plans to enforce the ceiling price by using its clout with the major shipping, insurance and re-insurance companies headquartered in Europe. The coalition aims to weaken the Russian military without triggering a spike in oil prices.

What will be the impact of the price cap?

Emerging market economies: They will be affected directly by the price cap. For instance, it will end up hurting a country like Bangladesh which finds itself facing a tough balance of payments situation because of an energy shock.

Note: Russia is now India's third largest crude supplier.

On Russia: The eight months of sanctions on Russia since it invaded Ukraine has neither brought the fighting to an end nor had any impact on Russia's behaviour.

What are the potential outcomes of the sanctions?

The sanctions are a blunt tool that ends up hurting countries unrelated to the problem, without achieving any of the core objectives of Western nations imposing sanctions.

For instance, the series of sanctions initiated by the US on Iran since 1979 have failed to provide any meaningful impact on Iranian foreign policy. On the other hand, they hurt countries such as India that sourced crude oil from there.

So, a price ceiling on Russia's oil exports is unlikely to work. India should act in its national interest and procure more oil from Russia when prices are cheap.

2. [Appointments are important — but they can't protect institutions from political interference](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Appointments are important — but they can't protect institutions from political interference**” published in the **Indian Express** on **5th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 2 – Governance.

Relevance: About the independence of the institutions.

News: The Supreme Court's interrogation regarding the [appointments to the Election Commission](#) has raised the issue of institutional independence.

What are the various types of institutions and their role in a democracy?

The **role of most institutions** in a democracy is to enforce not build political consensus. These institutions thus do not have an independent source of political power and rely instead on the backing from political intermediaries for their mandate.

Other institutions such as the judiciary and election commission may be required to adjudicate between competing claims in line with the existing normative consensus.

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Some institutions like the RBI may be empowered for fixed functions like monetary policy and so on.

Read here: [Why the judiciary may not be the best selector of election commissioners](#)

What is the role of political intermediaries in the functioning of these institutions?

The institution and its role are an **outcome of political consensus** wherein political intermediaries have agreed to delineate some function of governance and endow it to this institution.

When the balance of power is equally distributed, these institutions have greater amplitude. However, if the balance of power tilts too far towards one faction, institutional independence starts to weaken.

In such situations, institutions will be able to maintain independence if the executive influence on appointments is limited.

How political power can hamper the independence of institutions?

Political power can manifest in an institution's independence in multiple ways. For instance, **at the individual level:** Dissent can be neutralised through inducement, marginalisation, intimidation, blackmail, harassment, propaganda, transfers, forcing persons to exit on their own etc.

How to ensure an institution's independence?

Re-establishing consensus: It can be done by arriving at a consensus by political parties and mobilising public opinion and organisation.

Increase public trust in institutions: Democracy is necessarily mediated through institutions and widespread institutional distrust can only pave the way for autocracy and populism. Hence, institutions should gain public trust.

3. [MPs and MLAs have special rights to free speech for a valid reason](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"MPs and MLAs have special rights to free speech for a valid reason"** published in **Live Mint** on **5th December 2022**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Governance**

Relevance: **Concerns associated with parliamentary privileges of MPs.**

News: The Supreme Court is reconsidering the privileges granted to the legislators in the Parliament or in Assemblies. The freedom of speech of MPs and MLAs are protected by the Constitution.

What are the Constitutional provisions regarding free speech for MPs and MLAs?

The Constitution provides all Indian citizens with freedom of speech **under Article 19** which is subjected to reasonable restrictions.

However, the freedom of speech granted to MPs and MLAs in the Parliament or in Assemblies is protected under **Articles 105 and 194** respectively, as a parliamentary privilege.

This freedom is **only subjected to the provisions** of the Constitution and standing orders of concerned legislative body.

MPs **cannot be punished in** connection with any vote or speech made in Parliament. Courts are also barred from making inquiries into proceedings in Parliament.

Therefore, the free speech of parliamentarians has been protected more than free speech available to citizens.

Why is this freedom important for MPs and MLAs?

The free speech of legislators protects the **integrity of discussions** in Parliament and acts as a shield against the suppression by the executive.

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Further, **Freedom of expression** is regarded as the foundation of a **liberal democracy** and imposing unfair restrictions on legislators will hamper this foundation.

Therefore, it is important to ensure such freedoms to the legislators as regulating it can impact the ability of Parliament to check the Executive.

What are the concerns associated with this freedom?

At present there are 2 types of challenges to this freedom, in front of Supreme Court (SC):

First, the SC is considering whether there can be additional restrictions on speeches by MPs as there has been rise in the hate speech.

Second, the problem of bribery of legislators because of the provisions of Article 105(2). The SC in the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (**JMM**) bribery case held that bribes given for votes is not punishable under the **Prevention of Corruption Act** as they were the votes taken in Parliament. This view is being reconsidered.

Article 105(2) provides protection to the legislators against the proceedings of the court related to vote, speech or any publication made under the authority of the Parliament.

However, both of these concerns do not dilute the parliamentary privileges and both can be addressed separately.

What are the provisions present for the hate speech by legislators?

First Issue

The hate speeches made by MPs and MLAs that causes offence are punishable under Indian law if made outside the legislative house.

Further, if their speech is printed in newspapers that goes against the law then s/he can be punished.

Second Issue

As per the amended **Prevention of Corruption Act**, illegal satisfaction is complete at the time a bribe is made and it is punishable without any further follow up.

However, **this act has no connection** with any vote or speech made in the Parliament and it is protected under Article 105(2).

Therefore, the **JJM bribery case** can be reconsidered on the basis that illegal satisfaction is not connected with any vote or speech in Parliament. The **UK Supreme Court** has taken the same view in the parliamentary expenses case in R. vs Chaytor.

What is the way ahead?

The responsibility to improve politics and bring an ecosystem that discourages irresponsible speech and corruption lies with the citizens more than with the laws.

Constitutional safeguards exist to ensure the **structural integrity of political democracy**. Therefore, using these laws to correct political problems is not the solution.

4. [Recrafting India nutrition initiative](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Recrafting India nutrition initiative**” published in **The Indian Express** on **5th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Poverty and hunger

News– The article explains the issues of health and nutrition in India

According to RGI, India’s maternal mortality rate was 97 during 2018-20. It was 301 during 2001-03. Infant mortality rate was 27 in 2021. It was 58 in 2005.

As per NFHS-5, 35.5% of children under 5 are stunted, 19.3% are wasted.

What is NRHM?

NRHM was launched in 2005 to provide **accessible and affordable healthcare**. It also provides secondary and tertiary services .

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It seems to have a positive impact on health indicators. Though allocations for NRHM did not keep pace.

What explains the gains of NRHM? It had a clear thrust on crafting a credible public health system. **Community connect, human resources and flexible financial resources** are available at all levels.

Central. State governments partnered with civil society with full involvement of frontline workers. **Community monitoring** was done by **civil society**.

The approach was **pragmatic** and provided for diversity of **state-specific interventions**. The planning was **decentralised**. States and districts prepared their own annual plans.

Institution building was facilitated in work with panchayats and Rogi Kalyan Samitis. Professionals were brought in to improve the process.

Why the programmes to reduce malnutrition has not been successful?

Poshan Abhiyan is not able to solve the challenges of malnutrition.

The initiatives for nutrition have remained **compartmentalised and fragmented**.

Institutional role of local panchayats and communities with untied funds is still lagging.

What steps are needed to tackle the challenge of malnutrition?

ICDS needs to be revamped to converge with health, education, water, sanitation and food security at all levels under the local government umbrella,

It is important to allow for **context-specific and need-based prioritisation** at every Anganwadi centre by allowing **flexibility through decentralised local action**.

Gram panchayats, women collectives and community organisations should be responsible for education, health, nutrition and livelihoods. **Panchayats led committees** of concerned wider departments are needed at block and district zila parishad level.

There is a need for operationalizing **village-specific planning processes** with decentralised financial resources.

Encouraging diversity of local foods including millets and ensuring availability of basic drugs and healthcare facilities are required.

There is a need to intensify **behaviour change** through communication.

Creating a platform for adolescent girls in every village for their **empowerment** and diversified livelihood is needed.

It calls for a **whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach**. Nutrition challenge is also a **women empowerment** challenge. Decentralised is the way forward.

5. [Faith and freedom -Freedom of religion is protected when state keeps away from matters of faith](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "Faith and freedom -Freedom of religion is protected when state keeps away from matters of faith" published in **The Hindu** on **6th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: concerns associated with anti-conversion law in Gujarat

News: The article discusses the tussle between Gujarat government and High Court regarding the anti-conversion law.

What is the tussle between Gujarat Government and Gujarat High Court regarding religious conversion law in the state?

Section 5 of the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003 requires prior permission from the concerned District Magistrate for any conversion done directly or indirectly.

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Gujarat High Court has put a stay on **Section 5 of the Act** because it covered inter-faith marriages as instances of illegal conversion whereas the Gujarat government is considering to remove a stay on this provision and implement it.

As per the High Court, the prior permission requirement would force someone to disclose one's religious belief or any change of faith. Which is contrary to Supreme Court rulings that say marriage and faith involve an individual's choice.

Whereas, the Gujarat government argues that the prior permission in Section 5 is meant to prevent the need to question the genuine nature of the conversion in an inter-religious marriage and stay on it is affecting even genuine inter-faith marriages.

Why is Section 5 of the Act against the Freedom of Religion?

Freedom of religion is protected only when no questions are raised and no suspicion is entertained when an inter-faith marriage has taken place. Therefore, forcing someone to disclose an intent to change one's faith violates **Freedom of Conscience and the Right to Privacy**.

What can be the course of action?

SC has observed that conversion through **allurement or charity work** is a serious problem in the country. This might provoke the central government to come up with anti-conversion measures on a national scale.

Further, any law that deals with conversion should be made judiciously that focuses on protecting **religious freedom and communal harmony**.

6. [No uniformity in parole and furlough rules](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“No uniformity in parole and furlough rules”** published in **The Hindu** on **6th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance– Criminal justice system

News– The article explains the issues related to the system of Parole and Furlough followed by states.

What are legal provisions related to Parole and Furlough?

The **Prisons Act, 1894** and the **Prisoners Act, 1900** did not contain any specific provision pertaining to parole and furlough. However, **Section 59 of the Prisons Act** empowers States to make rules for the shortening of sentences and for rewards for good conduct.

Prisons fall in the **State List of the Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution. Therefore States can legislate on issues related to prisons.

What are issues with the system of Parole and Furlough followed by states?

The Uttar Pradesh rules provide for the 'suspension of sentence by the government generally up to one month. Maharashtra's rules permit release of a convict on furlough for 21 or 28 days and on 'regular parole' for 45 to 60 days.

The recently revised rules of Haryana permit regular parole to a convict up to 10 weeks in two parts. Furlough is allowed for three to four weeks in a calendar year, and emergency parole up to four weeks.

What does it mean by Furlough and Parole?

It is considered as an **incentive** for good conduct in prison and is counted as a sentence served. Parole or leave is mostly a **suspension of sentence**.

Emergency parole or leave is granted for specified emergencies such as a death, serious illness or marriage in the family.

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Regular parole or leave is granted after serving a minimum sentence in prison. Some States include other familial and social obligations such as sowing or harvesting of agricultural crops, essential repair of houses.

Haryana has a long list of 'hardcore' prisoners who are not entitled to be released except on '**custody parole**' under certain conditions.

What is the way forward?

There is a need for a **common legal framework** in place to guide the States and check misuse. Otherwise, arbitrariness will endanger the entire **criminal justice system**.

At least half of the States should come together to request the Central government to legislate a **common law for the country on parole and furlough**.

7. [India's G20 Presidency: Championing the Global South](#)

Source– The post is based on the article "**India's G20 Presidency: Championing the Global South**" published in **The Indian Express** on **6th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Global south and India

News– The article explains the renewed interest of international politics for the global south. It also explains India's new perspective for the global south.

What are different perspectives on India's approach for the global south?

Some people in India welcome the return to ideas like **non-alignment and Third World solidarity**. These influenced foreign policy of India in the past.

US and Europe, wonder if Delhi is returning to **anti-Western orientation**.

India's eastern partners too are apprehensive that Delhi might privilege the "**Global South**". It may downgrade the new forums like the BRICS built in recent years to promote a multipolar world.

Others think that the claim to champion the Global South are not in consonance with India's idea of a **vasudhaiva kutumbakam**.

What are the changing realities of new world order?

Many of the old constructs from the second half of the 20th century were framed around the axes of **West versus the East and the North versus the South**. They are not aligned with the ground realities.

Consider the example of China. It has long been viewed as part of the East and the South. But, now it is the second largest economic and military power and sits at the top of the **global hierarchy** and has deep ties with the West.

By the 1980s, most countries had moved away from the so-called third path to economic development. They began to adopt the ideas of **liberalization and globalization**.

India also restructured its **economy and foreign policy**. India continued to participate in the **NAM summits** and various affiliated forums in the United Nations. Promoting **Third World solidarity** was not a priority for India.

What are the new perspectives of great power for the global south?

World is entering into an era of renewed **great power competition for the Global South**.

China sees the Global South as a huge **economic and geopolitical opportunity**. Its strategy has culminated into the **Belt and Road Initiative**. China's new global weight is not limited to the economic domain, but also envelops the cultural, political, technological, and the military.

China is eager to exploit the setbacks to US policies in the Middle East. He will also participate in a **Sino-Arab summit**. His visit will highlight the **growing convergence** between the Arab quest

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for **strategic diversification** away from the West and Beijing's determination to have its footprint in Arab.

US is making special efforts to reconnect with the **Global South**. Last June, the US sought to inject new life into the summit with the Latin American countries. Washington is hosting the African leaders to regain some influence in the dynamic continent. Over the last two years, it has also **intensified the engagement** with the South East Asian and South Pacific countries.

Europe has begun to offer alternatives to **Belt and Road** by putting down serious money for infrastructure development. If Europe ever becomes a **geopolitical actor**, it will be compelled to take a more **strategic view** of the non-Western world.

What is India's position with regard to the global south?

India too has risen in the **international hierarchy**. Although it is by no means a **pole** in its own right, its room for international activism has grown significantly. It can put its weight behind the issues of special concern to the developing world amidst the challenges presented by **deglobalisation, the pandemic and climate change**.

India's objective is not to rebuild a **global trade union** against the North. India is eager to become a **bridge** between the North and the South by focusing on practical outcomes rather than returning to **old ideological battles**.

In recent years, Delhi has often talked of itself as a "**South Western power**" that is capable of building deep partnerships with the US and Europe and at the same time, championing the interests of the **Global South**.

What is the way forward for India to champion the cause of the global South?

India must also come to terms with the fact that the Global South is not a **coherent group** and does not have a single shared agenda. There is much differentiation within the South today in terms of wealth and power, needs and capabilities. This demands a **tailored Indian policy** to different regions and groups of the developing world.

Championing the Global South today would demand more **active Indian engagement** with the messy regional politics within the developing world.

8. [Counting India's poor: Numbers suggest the need for a welfare state](#)

Source– The post is based on the article "**Counting India's poor: Numbers suggest the need for a welfare state**" published in **The Indian Express** on **6th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Poverty and hunger

Relevance– Estimation of poverty

News– The article explains the issues of estimation of poverty in India and its implications for government.

What are different approaches used in India for calculating the prevalence of poverty?

The first is the **calorie intake approach**. 2400 calories per day was taken as a standard and converted into monetary value.

The World Bank uses the concept of **income per day**. It is now at \$1.90. It translates into Rs 160 a day in India.

The third approach is use of **income tax data**.

What are the shortcomings of this approach?

Calorie approach– People can not live with just calories. They need other amenities like housing, clothing and education.

World bank– Using a **universal yardstick** across the world is not right. A weak currency can give a higher value in India.

Income tax data– It captures only a small segment as it leaves the big universe of rural people.

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How can we calculate the number of vulnerable populations that need support?

The concept of poor needs to be broadened to represent the needy or vulnerable section of the society.

The government has been aggressive in reaching out to vulnerable populations that require support to maintain their minimum needs during the pandemic.

PMGKY covered 800 million people. It means 60% of the population needed support from the government. The **National Portal of India** in 2020 had put out a static that 42 crore people benefitted from PMGKY. It is around 30% of the population.

136 million families were covered under **MGNREGA**.

The **PM Kisan Yojana** covers 110 million farmers. It yields a number close to a third of the population, assuming that families comprise four members. This does not cover **vulnerable non-farming classes**, especially in urban areas.

By putting all these numbers together, the proportion of the **vulnerable population** in the economy would range between 30% to 60%.

What is the way forward for fulfilling the needs of the vulnerable section?

The government has to assume the role of a **welfare state**.

The focus has to be on **job creation**. Agriculture has to be commercialised. Manufacturing has to be revived.

A joint effort between centre and states is needed.

9. [Impacts of India-UK FTA: Nothing So Great About Free Trade With Great Britain](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Nothing So Great About Free Trade With Great Britain**” published in **The Times of India** on **6th November 2022**.

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

Relevance: About India-UK FTA negotiation.

News: Recently the possibilities for India-UK free trade agreement have increased.

About India-UK FTA negotiation

Must Read:

- [India – UK Free Trade Agreement \(FTA\) | Timeline](#)
- [India, UK aim to launch FTA negotiations by November 1](#)

What will be the impact of the India-UK FTA on India’s economy?

Positive impacts of India-UK FTA

A study by the UK’s department of international trade said that India-UK FTA could increase India’s bilateral exports to the UK by £10.6 bn, and that of the UK by £16.7 bn.

-India might witness a modest increase in its exports of goods and services, especially IT sector, to the UK.

-With the UK’s customs duties low in most sectors, Indian exports could make gains only in a few sectors, such as garments, leather products, gems and jewellery.

Negative impacts of India-UK FTA

Inevitable job losses in those sectors where imports from the UK would displace domestically produced goods and services in India.

Reduction/elimination of customs duties by India and opening of some services sectors, particularly financial services to UK.

The FTA might **curtail the ability of the Indian government** to use policy instruments to boost the domestic production of goods and services. This is because, in India-UAE FTA, the

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government agreed to provide non-discriminatory treatment to UAE producers. India might agree to a similar demand from the UK also.

Not significant for Indian exporters: UK's government procurement market already faces intense competition from countries such as the EU and US. So, it is unlikely that Indian exporters will make any significant gains in the UK government procurement market.

Challenge from the environmental aspect: The FTA could contain environment-related obligations that could hinder the Indian government's efforts to low-carbon economy transition driven predominantly by domestic players.

Read more: [India-UK FTA costs and opportunities](#)

What should India do before finalising India-UK FTA?

Conduct a detailed and objective assessment: India should analyse the economic benefits and costs of the India-UK FTA. Especially the provisions relating to labour, environment, digital trade and IPRs – before moving forward in the negotiations.

In conclusion, a meagre increase in India's exports of £10.6 bn over a decade does not justify taking demanding commitments that impact India on many fronts.

10. [Denting democracy – On judicial appointments](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Denting democracy**” published in the **Business Standard** on **7th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance– Judicial appointment

News– The article explains the issue of appointment of judges by Collegium.

Recently, a Bench of the SC expressed anguish at the government sitting on Collegium recommendations for fresh appointments.

What is the constitutional provision related to appointment of judges?[Text Wrapping Break]**Article 124(2)** of constitution says that every judge of SC shall be appointed by the President by **warrant under his hand and seal** after **consultation** with such of the judges of SC and of HCs as the President may deem necessary for the purpose. It also provides that in the case of appointment of judges other than chief justice, the chief justice of India shall always be consulted.

Which article of constitution was used by SC for the collegium system?

The Supreme Court assumes the role of **chief appointer of judges** by using a special provision of the constitution called **Article 142(1)**. According to this provision the Supreme Court may pass such judgement as is necessary for doing **complete justice**. It shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India in such a manner as may be prescribed by law made by Parliament.

This provision allows SC not only to **interpret the law** but also **write its own law**.

Which instances show the tendency of the SC to assume law making powers?

It is willing to entertain all kinds of alleged **PILs**.

It has passed judgement ranging from validity of government decision on GM mustard to vaccine policy to additional taxes on SUVs entering Delhi.

Recently, it asked whether ECs can be appointed by a three member panel.

What does it signify?

There is a strong case to believe that the higher judiciary is becoming **authoritarian and unaccountable**. The delicate **system of checks and balances** has been set aside by the judiciary.

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There is a strong case for abolishing **article 142** amending article 124 to clearly reflect a reasonable role for executive and Parliament in selecting judges. The government must obtain a **political consensus** on this.

11. [The pandemic's big disruption of schooling calls for close analysis](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**The pandemic's big disruption of schooling calls for close analysis**" published in the **Livemint** on **7th November 2022**.

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

Relevance: About attaining universal elementary education.

News: Despite the enactment of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, a large number of children still continue to be out of the elementary education system.

How government is promoting elementary education?

With the aim of universalizing free and compulsory elementary education for all India enacted the Right to Education (RTE) Act in 2009. The act holds local authorities responsible for **a)** Maintaining a record of children (up to the age of 14 years) residing in their jurisdiction, **b)** Ensuring that children are enrolled in schools and attending the same, and thereby on their way to completing their elementary education.

Read more: [School education: Children and schooling in the post covid 19 era](#)

Why children are still out of the elementary education system?

Multidimensional factors like poverty, disability, poor health, child marriage, child labour, migration, discrimination, and other children are not completing their elementary education.

Impact of a covid pandemic: According to the United Nations, about 24 million learners (from the pre-primary to university level) may never return to school globally.

India saw one of the longest periods of school closures (almost two years) during the pandemic compared to other countries in the world. India's **digital divide** resulted in absenteeism from education. **Inaccessibility to digital devices or the internet** is the major hurdle. For instance, the proportion of children who 'did not receive any online education' ranged from 10% to 60%.

So, more children belonging to poorer households, lower caste groups and migrant households, apart from students with various disabilities, have been absent from online classes or have dropped out of school altogether.

Read more: [ASER Survey and issues in school education – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the challenges in attaining universal elementary education?

a) India still lacks a clear picture of the **status of out-of-school children in the aftermath of the pandemic** in India, **b)** A comparison with pre-pandemic data highlights an **increase in the percentage** of children in the age cluster of 6-14 years who were not enrolled in any school during the pandemic, and **c)** Only a few studies have documented the **unique challenges faced by children with disabilities and migrant-household children**.

Read more: [Year End Review 2021-Department of School Education & Literacy](#)

India needs to analyse the concerns and minimize the challenges faced in accessing education in times of crisis.

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12. [Maha-Nataka, Why? – Political grandstanding like that over Maharashtra, Karnataka border forgets many Indians are multilingual](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Maha-Nataka, Why? – Political grandstanding like that over Maharashtra, Karnataka border forgets many Indians are multilingual**” published in **The Times of India** on **7th November 2022**.

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

Relevance: About the boundary dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka.

News: Long-running boundary dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka has surfaced again. About Maharashtra and Karnataka dispute

Must read: [Explained | What is the Karnataka-Maharashtra border dispute?](#)

What needs to be done?

a) India needs a more **active national interstate council** to manage tensions that arise out of disagreements over maps, b) India should move towards **creating a common market**. For instance, India aims to dismantle interstate fiscal barriers through the roll-out of GST. More such activities should be promoted, and c) Politicians should understand that one of **India's strengths is the extent of multilingualism** even when internal borders have been determined largely on a linguistic basis.

13. [BIMSTEC as key to a new South Asian regional order](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**BIMSTEC as key to a new South Asian regional order**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Regional grouping

Relevance– BIMSTEC

News– The article explains the importance of BIMSTEC and scope for improvement in its working. It also explains the weaknesses of SAARC.

What is SAARC? SAARC is an intergovernmental organisation. It was established by Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to promote economic growth in South Asia. Afghanistan acceded to SAARC later.

What are the weaknesses of SAARC?

SAARC has failed abjectly in accomplishing most of its objectives. South Asia continues to be an extremely poor and **least integrated region** in the world.

The **intraregional trade and investment** in South Asia are very low when compared to other regions such as the ASEAN and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Pakistan has adopted an **obstructionist attitude** within SAARC. It has repeatedly blocked several vital initiatives such as the **motor vehicles agreement**, aimed at bolstering **regional connectivity**. **Deepening hostility** between India and Pakistan has made matters worse. Since 2014, no SAARC summit has taken place leaving the organisation practically dead.

Why is regionalism important for South Asia?

Bilateralism is undoubtedly important. It can at best complement, not substitute, regional or multilateral efforts. **Regionalism** has brought immense success in other parts such as East Asia and Africa.

A new concept of **new regional economic order** has been developed. It is a process through which developing countries search for a trade-development model, based on **incrementalism and flexibility**.

Regionalism can deliver prosperity in the South Asian region too, especially because **multilateralism** is weakening.

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Current government has adopted '**neighbourhood first**' policy. India can judiciously employ regionalism to serve its interests in the entire region.

What is BIMSTEC and its importance?

Reviving SAARC by infusing political energy into it and updating its dated Charter can make it functional, but doesn't look practical at present. So, the next best scenario is to look at other regional instruments such as the BIMSTEC. It is an **intergovernmental organisation** established in 1997.

BIMSTEC comprises five South Asian nations named Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka and two ASEAN countries named Myanmar and Thailand. Importantly, Pakistan is not a BIMSTEC member.

After 25 years, BIMSTEC finally adopted its Charter earlier this year. The BIMSTEC Charter is significantly better than the **SAARC Charter**. For instance, unlike the SAARC Charter, **Article 6 of the BIMSTEC Charter** talks about the 'Admission of new members' to the group. This paves the way for the admission of countries such as the Maldives.

What is the weakness of BIMSTEC?

BIMSTEC Charter, to boost **economic integration**, does not contain the **flexible participation scheme** found in ASEAN Charter. This flexible scheme, also known as the '**ASEAN Minus X**' formula, allows two or more ASEAN members to initiate negotiations for economic commitments. A flexible '**BIMSTEC Minus X**' formula might have allowed India and Bangladesh or India and Thailand to conduct their ongoing bilateral **free trade agreement** negotiations under the broader BIMSTEC umbrella. This would have eventually strengthened BIMSTEC by enabling the gradual and incremental expansion of these binding commitments to other members.

What are the steps that need to be taken for strengthening the BIMSTEC?

BIMSTEC should not end up as another SAARC. its member countries should **raise the stakes**.

A high-quality FTA offering deep economic integration. would be an ideal step.

India should explore legal ways to move successful SAARC institutions such as SAU to BIMSTEC.

14. [Need for an effective tourist police](#)

Source– The post is based on the article "**Need for an effective tourist police**" published in **The Hindu** on **8th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

Relevance– Issues related to tourism sector

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

A few days ago, a Kerala session court sentenced two men to life imprisonment for the rape and murder of a Latvian tourist in 2018. In another case, a 12-year-old Russian girl was raped in a hotel in Goa this year.

What are the statistics related to crime against tourism?

As many as 29 foreigners were murdered in the last three years. While 14 foreigners fell victim to rape last year, 16 were raped in 2020 and 12 in 2019. As many as 15 cases of assault to outraging modesty of foreign women were registered last year across the country, apart from 14 complaints of cheating.

Why is the safety of tourists important?

Crime against foreigners **dents our image globally**. It could also adversely affect the **inflow of foreign tourists**, which is a vital source of income for our country. India's earnings through tourism was \$30.06 billion in 2019.

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There are predictions of about 13.34 million foreign tourists arriving by 2024. It calls for upgrading our security systems specially to provide a **flawless security blanket** cover to foreign tourists.

What is the concept of tourist police?

This concept has not been given the kind of attention it deserves. The States that have tourist police are Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Rajasthan and Kerala.

The **BPRD** has brought out a booklet on the tourist police scheme detailing the mode of setting up of tourist police stations and control rooms, outposts, uniforms, recruitment, qualifications, training and logistics requirements for tourist police stations.

As many as **25 popular tourist spots** have been identified in the country where the tourist police necessarily need to be deployed to help foreigners.

As an **incentive**, a 30% deputation allowance has been recommended for the police personnel who join the tourist police on deputation.

What is the way forward for tourist security?

Much needs to be done to instil a sense of security in them even before they leave their countries for India. All criminals in and around tourist spots need to be identified and kept under **constant surveillance**.

Fast track courts should be set up immediately to try cases of crime against foreigners and the culprits punished speedily.

Such speedy disposal of cases of crime against foreigners can be replicated if we have the will.

15. The debate around conjugal visits for prisoners

Source– The post is based on the article **“The debate around conjugal visits for prisoners”** published in **The Hindu** on **8th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary and significant provisions of constitution

Relevance– Issues related to criminal justice system

News– The article explains the issue of **conjugal visits** for inmates.

The State of Punjab has allowed conjugal visits for inmates.

What are conjugal visits?

In the context of prisons, **conjugal visits** refer to the concept of allowing a prisoner to spend some time in privacy with his spouse within the precincts of a jail.

What is the significance of conjugal visits?

It is often argued that conjugal visits can have positive impacts in the form of **psychological health benefits** for prisoners, **preservation of marital ties** and, reduction in the rates of **homosexuality and sexual aggression** within prisons.

It is also argued that conjugal visits are a fundamental right of the spouses of the prisoners. Prisoner rights are internationally recognised through the **United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** etc. The right to maintain family relations including conjugal visits are included in these treaties.

Most **prison Acts and Rules** across the country accept the importance of maintenance of continuity in family and social relations.

What are the judicial views on conjugal visits?

Sunil Batra vs Delhi Administration (1979)– SC judge Justice Iyer observed that “visits to prisoners by family and friends are solace in isolation. Only a **dehumanised system** can deprive prison inmates of this humane amenity.”

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Jasvir Singh vs State of Punjab– The High Court held that this right to conjugality is available to prisoners under **Article 21**, subject to restrictions.

Meharaj vs State (2022)– The Madras HC observed that there have to be **differential standards** in enforcement of **Article 21** for law abiders and law violators. Conjugal visits could not be held as a **fundamental right**. The prisoner would still be eligible to avail leave for conjugal visits if there are extraordinary reasons such as infertility treatments.

16. [Af-Pak Again – Afghanistan is back to being a terror hub, Pakistan is in political chaos. Bad news for the world](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Af-Pak Again – Afghanistan is back to being a terror hub, Pakistan is in political chaos. Bad news for the world”** published in **The Times of India** on **8th November 2022**.

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

Relevance: About the Afghanistan-Pakistan status and the growth of terrorism.

News: Terrorist activities have once again increased significantly in Afghanistan. This was also the focus of recent India-Central Asia NSA-level meeting also.

About the recent India-Central Asia NSA-level meeting

Must read: [Curbing terror in Afghanistan, enhancing connectivity key to India-Central Asia security: NSA Doval](#)

What is the status of Afghanistan at present?

It has been a year since the Taliban returned to power in Kabul. It is clear that the Taliban regime is either incapable of or unwilling to crack down on multiple terror groups operating from Afghan soil. Thus, they failed in their pledge to not allow any group to use Afghan territory to attack other countries.

How has the Afghan regime impacted Pakistan?

Pakistan earlier cheered the return of the Taliban, hoping to regain the strategic depth it previously enjoyed in that country. But despite the presence of pro-Pakistani elements on Afghan soil, there has been a continued attack on Pakistan across the Durand Line.

Along with the political turmoil in Pakistan, the country was unable to control terrorism.

Read more: [A balancing act — In re-establishing Indian presence in Afghanistan, timing and tact are crucial](#)

What should be done to control terrorism emanating from Afghanistan and Pakistan?

Along with the Ukraine crisis, there should be a renewed focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan.

17. [The end of Covid Zero](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“The end of Covid Zero”** published in the **Business Standard** on **9th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Effects of policies of developed and developing countries on India interest.

News– The article explains the scenario of the upcoming Covid wave in China and its implications for India.

What is the new Chinese policy on Covid?

Chinese leadership has sharply reversed course and begun relaxing pandemic-related restrictions in the country.

It was done after widespread protests against its **“Covid Zero” policy**.

What could be the impact of the new Chinese policy on Covid?

Though **Omicron** is less virulent than Delta, it is still a deadly virus in an **unprotected population**. 6,000 people died in Hong Kong earlier this year after Omicron had become

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dominant once some citywide restrictions had been relaxed. Hong Kong had access to Western vaccines as well as Chinese ones.

A **surge in infections** in the mainland after reopening is almost inevitable. This could turn into a surge in deaths if Chinese vaccines prove **relatively ineffective** against the currently circulating variants.

Is China well prepared for this new Covid wave?

The three years of Covid Zero in China have not been used to **build up capacity** in preparation for relaxed restrictions. One analysis has suggested that a full reopening might lead to almost six million people requiring **intensive care**.

China has fewer than four ICU beds per 100,000 people. This ratio is much worse in the interior than in the cities along the coast.

Only two-thirds of those above 80 have received a full **vaccination course**, and just 40 per cent were given a **booster dose**. In addition, the **efficacy** of these vaccines has come into question.

What does it mean for India?

India has learned to live with Covid. Vaccination has reached most of the country. **Social distancing norms** have been suspended. These assumptions are, however, predicated on the fact that Covid-19 is not surging anywhere in the world but has a relatively steady rate of infection.

The government will **need to re-examine** these assumptions in the case of a surge in China after it begins to reopen. Vaccination requirements and testing for arrivals may have to be reintroduced. The government's **Covid policy**, including its **genome sequencing** of variants, must also be re-examined.

Policy flexibility in response to **medical and epidemiological developments** have always been central to **effective Covid control**. It is time to revisit those principles.

18. [The sustained growth in remittances](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The sustained growth in remittances**” published in **The Hindu** on **9th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian diaspora

Relevance– Economic cooperation of India with GCC and advanced economies

News– The article explains the trends of remittances across the world. It also explains the case of India

According to the **World Bank's latest 'Remittances Brave Global Headwinds'** report, remittances to India are set to touch a record \$100 billion in 2022. India received \$89.4 billion in 2021. This is the first time a country will reach the \$100 billion mark.

What is a remittance?

It denotes a **sum of money** sent by one party to another. These days, the term describes the money sent by someone working abroad to their family back home. In the case of India, the largest sources of remittances have been from Indians working in the **Gulf Cooperation Council**.

What has been the general trend in remittances this year?

World remittances are expected to touch **\$794 billion in 2022**. This represents a growth of 4.9%. Of the \$794 billion, \$626 billion went to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Remittances represent an even larger source of **external finance** for LMICs in 2022, compared to foreign direct investment, official development assistance, and portfolio investment flows. The top recipient countries this year are expected to be India, followed by Mexico and China.

What are the reasons behind the sustained growth in remittances?

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According to the **World Bank**, one of the main reasons is the gradual reopening of various sectors in host-country economies, following **pandemic disruptions**.

An allied reason was the migrants' determination to help their families back home during the tough **post-pandemic recovery phase**.

What are the reasons behind the resilience of India's inward remittance flows?

The report points to a **structural shift** in India's remittance economy. It is both in terms of the top destination countries, and the nature of the jobs held by migrants.

Remittances have benefitted from a gradual structural shift in Indian migrants' key destinations from largely **low-skilled, informal employment** in the GCC countries to a dominant share of **high-skilled jobs in high-income countries** such as the U.S., the U.K., and East Asia.

In fact, between 2016-17 and 2020-21, remittances from the U.S., U.K. and Singapore increased from 26% to 36%. The share from five GCC countries dropped from 54% to 28%. In 2020-21, the U.S., with a share of 23%, surpassed Saudi Arabia as India's top source country for remittances. During the pandemic, Indian migrants in high-income countries worked from home and benefited from large **fiscal stimulus packages**.

In the GCC countries, Indian migrants benefited from governments' direct **support measures** to keep inflation low.

Indian migrants may also have taken advantage of the **depreciation of the Indian rupee** to increase their remittances.

What does the report say about future trends?

The report predicts that growth in remittances will fall to 2% in 2023 as the GDP growth in high-income countries continues to slow. For South Asia as a whole, the growth in remittances is expected to fall from 3.5% in 2022 to 0.7% in 2023.

In the U.S., **higher inflation** combined with a slowdown will limit remittance flows. The GCC countries will also see **cooling of remittance** outflows following a slowdown. The demand for labour is expected to soften as construction activities for the FIFA World Cup in Qatar have ended.

Remittances to India are forecast to grow by 4% next year.

19. What will India offer during its presidency of the G20?

Source– The post is based on the article “**What will India offer during its presidency of the G20?**” published in **The Hindu** on **9th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Global groupings

Relevance– G20 grouping and its working

News– The article explains the details of the G20 forum. It also explains the case of the India presidency of the grouping.

What is the history of the G20 forum?

The G20 forum was established in 1999 by the Finance Ministers and central bank governors of seven countries after a meeting in Washington DC. These countries are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. after a meeting in Washington DC.

The uniting factor was the **1997-98 financial crisis** and its aftermath.

The first meeting of G20 leaders took place in 1999. It was elevated to the level of heads of state in 2008. In 2009, G20 was designated the “**premier forum for international economic cooperation**”.

The forum initially dealt with matters related to **macroeconomics**. Over the years, its agenda has expanded to cover issues relating to **trade, climate change, sustainable development, health, agriculture, energy, and environment**.

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What does India's presidency mean?

As the President-nation, India will host the 18th **G20 Heads of State and Government Summit** in December 2023 in New Delhi.

The group does not have a **permanent secretariat**, and the presidency is supported by the previous, current, and future holders of the post, together called the **troika**.

Apart from hosting the summit and setting the theme, the G20 presidency does not come with any formal powers. However, India plans on showcasing its philosophies of **“Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, and LiFE** through the theme and the logo of the event. As G20 President, India's will strive for **just and equitable growth** for all in the world, in a **sustainable, holistic, responsible, and inclusive manner**.

India's presidency also comes as many countries witness **inflation and recession trends**. It is further compounded by the **Russia-Ukraine war** and the standoff between the European Union and Russia.

India's own problems with China pose a potential issue for the effective functioning of the forum.

How does the G20 forum work?

The processes under G20 are divided into **two parallel tracks — the finance track and the sherpa track**. The finance track is led by Finance Ministers and central bank governors of member nations. They meet throughout the year.

Sherpas are **personal emissaries** of leaders. They oversee negotiations all through the year, discussing agenda items for the summit and coordinating the substantive work of the G20.

Working groups designed around **specific themes** operate within both tracks.

Various international organisations such as the UN, IMF, and the OECD also participate in working groups.

[20. India's Central Asia outreach](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“India's Central Asia outreach”** published in **The Indian Express** on **9th December 2022**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – International Relations**

Relevance: **relations between India and Central Asia**

News: National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval hosted a meeting of his counterparts from five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan). This indicates the growing relation between the two.

What is the history of relation between India and Central Asia?

India was connected with Central Asia through the **Silk Route**. India also shares old and deep cultural ties with the region.

Jawaharlal Nehru in 1955 travelled to Almaty, Tashkent, and Ashgabat. **P V Narasimha Rao** visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 1992, and Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1995. **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** in 2003 became the first Prime Minister to visit Tajikistan.

However, after the **“Connect Central Asia policy”** in 2012, the relation between India and Central Asia became better and it further improved with the visit of PM Modi to all five Central Asian countries in July 2015.

What is the strategic importance of Central Asia?

Central Asia is extremely **rich in mineral and natural resources**. For example, Kazakhstan has one of the biggest reserves of uranium, the Kyrgyz Republic is rich in hydro-power while Turkmenistan has one of the world's largest reserves of natural gas.

India's engagement with the Central Asian countries is important because of – **a)** security cooperation after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, **b)** to counter China's influence in the

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region, **c)** plans for connectivity with Europe including the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), **d)** to meet its energy needs (Turkmenistan is part of the proposed TAPI gas pipeline), and **e)** for old cultural links and trade potential.

What have been the recent developments between India and Central Asia?

The engagement between India and Central Asia has been on the backdrop of Taliban taking over Afghanistan. There has been a meeting on the Afghanistan-focussed **Regional Security Dialogue** in the last year.

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has highlighted that India and Central Asia share similar concerns regarding the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Further, PM Modi also attended a virtual summit in January 2022 with the leaders of the Central Asian countries. He called for an integrated approach to regional cooperation and raised Afghanistan as a common concern.

The decision to hold a leaders' summit every two years, a joint working group on Afghanistan, joint counter-terrorism exercises, and a group to operationalise the use of Chabahar port by all five countries have also been taken between India and Central Asian countries.

What are the challenges with the relations between India and Central Asia?

China – China has a direct border with the Central Asian countries and has a bilateral trade of \$50 billion whereas India's trade with the region is only \$2 billion. China has also made major investments in these countries with its Belt and Road Initiative.

Lack of access to land transport – India lacks land transport access with Central Asia due to the blockage by Pakistan. To overcome the issue, India wants to integrate the INSTC with Chabahar port in Iran to access the resource-rich region.

Security – There are also security challenges such as extremism, terrorism, and radicalisation in the region. Central Asia shares a boundary with Afghanistan and the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan poses a serious security challenge for the countries in the region.

21. Expand the food safety net without any more delay

Source: The post is based on the article “**Expand the food safety net without any more delay**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Poverty and hunger

Relevance: Issues related to food security

News: The article explains the exclusionary challenges associated with NFSA, 2013.

The **National Food Security Act, 2013**, through the PDS, provides a crucial safety net for roughly 800 million people. Even critics of the PDS appreciated its services during the COVID-19 lockdown.

What are the exclusion-related challenges created by NFSA?

The exclusion problem could be due to the freeze in coverage in absolute terms (around 800 million).

Section 3(2) of the NFSA 2013 states that the entitlements of eligible households shall extend up to 75% of the rural population and up to 50% of the urban population.

Section 9 of NFSA required that the total number of persons to be covered shall be calculated on the basis of the population estimates as per the census of which the relevant figures have been published.

Between the last Census in 2011 and today, **population increase has not been accounted** for in determining the number of ration cards. Even a decadal update has not happened due to the indefinite postponement of the 2021 census.

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What is the stand of SC on exclusion?

The Supreme Court of India has also agreed that the prayer to increase coverage seems to be genuine and justified. It directed the Union of India to come out with a formula, so that the benefits under NFSA are not restricted as per the census of 2011.

What is the position of the central government on the SC stand?

The central government filed a delayed response. It states that Section 9 of the NFSA requires that coverage be determined on the basis of the latest census published. In the wake of the unavailability of the latest Census data, any change or revision in the number of beneficiaries would **necessitate an amendment in the Act**.

The government response **states** one of the **prime concerns while fixing the ceiling** at the time of enactment of the NFSA. It was that “as the standard of living of people would improve over a period of time, the coverage may be reduced”.

The central government attempts repeatedly to shift the blame to State governments.

Are state governments responsible for the exclusion of people?

States are responsible for identifying people for PDS ration cards, once they are given the numbers to be covered by the central government.

Several State governments have used their own resources. This includes poor States such as Chhattisgarh and Odisha to expand coverage beyond the centrally determined quotas.

According to estimates, in 2020, there were 809 million NFSA PDS beneficiaries supported by the central government. An additional 90 million people had access to the same benefits from the PDS as NFSA beneficiaries through their State governments. States were subsidising another 51 million people. But their entitlements were less than those of NFSA beneficiaries.

What needs to be done by the SC?

The Supreme Court should direct the Government for additional coverage of roughly 100 million across States, so that the States can start identifying new ration card beneficiaries.

Poor people should not pay the price for the state’s failure in conducting the 2021 Census

22. The G-20 can be the UN Security Council alternative

Source: The post is based on the article “**The G-20 can be the UN Security Council alternative**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Global grouping

Relevance: India and G20

News: The article explains the significance of G20 as an alternative to UNSC. It also explains India’s role in promoting G20 as an alternative.

As India begins its presidency of the G-20, there is a certain reluctance on its part to try to end the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This position is because of the fear of failure, especially because of the position India has taken not to condemn Russia.

Why has UNSC proved to be a failure?

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the UNSC’s credibility hit rock bottom.

Any reform of the UNSC, particularly the expansion of its permanent membership, will be strongly resisted. The permanent members and a large majority of the General Assembly will resist because it does not benefit anyone except those who aspire to be permanent members.

Among the proposals made in the last three decades, there is none that can command the votes of the five permanent members as well as two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly.

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Why G20 can be an alternative to UNSC?

G-20 addresses major issues related to the global economy, such as international financial stability, climate change mitigation and sustainable development.

Its composition is such that it looks like it is an expanded Security Council. It is representative of all the significant countries of the 21st century. It is balanced between developed and developing countries.

The present permanent members and declared aspirants have been included while Africa and Latin America have also been represented. The EU represents a very important segment of the global power structure. A consensus decision of G-20 should be universally acceptable.

How will the G20 be transformed?

A gradual transformation of the G-20 from an economic body to a political body can be initiated on the basis of the **Bali Declaration**.

Bali declaration constitutes the consensus in the group on the Russia-Ukraine war. If the G-20 emerges as a peacemaker in Europe, it will attain legitimacy as a group to promote international peace and security.

The most important difference will be that no one can prevent its meetings by use of the veto. Care should be taken not to isolate anyone and promote a solution, which is acceptable.

How can India contribute to strengthening the G20?

The first step for India to take is to highlight the Bali Declaration and present a road map during the preparatory process for the G-20. It should persuade the sherpas to take it on its agenda.

This will enhance India's capacity to deal with the crisis in a formal way within the G-20. It will accomplish India's ultimate goal of securing the reform of the UNSC.

Once the basic work is done, the UNSC can formalise the decision and implement it for international peace and security.

Why is India best suited to promote the G20 as an alternative platform?

India has been an honest broker in international peace and security. It has taken strong positions on decolonisation and rights of the developing countries. It has promoted a balanced outcome.

India was the author of several landmark resolutions of the UNSC on the **question of Palestine**.

India was a part of efforts made to **prevent the expulsion of Egypt from the Non-Aligned Movement** at the Havana summit when the Arabs turned against Egypt.

Flexibility in negotiations even while being principled in its national position gave an advantage to India.

[23. Supreme Court on charity and conversion: The answer may lie in the words of Mahatma Gandhi](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Supreme Court on charity and conversion: The answer may lie in the words of Mahatma Gandhi**" published in **The Indian Express** on **10th December 2022**. **Syllabus:** GS2- Significant provisions of constitution. GS1-

Communalism and secularism

Relevance: Issues related to religion

News: The article explains the issue of religious conversion. It also explains the viewpoint of various ruling dispensations and organs of government on this issue.

What do the UDHR and the constitution say about religious conversion?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 provides for the **right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion**. This right includes the freedom to change his religion or belief, and to manifest his religion or belief.

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The **Constitution of India** recognised the fundamental **right to propagate, profess and practice one's religion**.

What has been the view of the apex court on this matter?

In two cases decided in 1954, the apex court observed that **Article 25** covered every individual's right to **propagate** his religious views for the edification of others.

It is the **propagation** of belief that is protected, no matter whether the **propagation** takes place in a church or monastery, or in a temple or parlour meeting.

What was the policy of rulers in the pre-independence era?

The British rulers of India, who were never shy of introducing measures to facilitate the conversion of others to their faith. They enacted in 1866 a **Native Converts Marriage Dissolution Act** to provide the facility of divorce to married Indians who converted to Christianity and were thereupon deserted by their non-converting spouses.

Several princely states of the pre-Independence era had enforced **anti-conversion laws**.

What is the policy on religious conversion in the post-independence era?

After Independence, the **Law Commission of India** recommended that **Native Converts Marriage Dissolution Act** be revised to make it a general law on the effect of post-marriage change of religion. The government did not take any action on it. It was eventually dropped from the statute book by the **Repealing and Amending Act of 2017**.

During 1967-68, state legislatures in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh enacted **anti-conversion laws**.

These were challenged in SC court in **Rev. Stanislaus, 1977 case**. It held that **Article 25** granted not the right to convert another person to one's own religion but only to **transmit and spread** one's religion by an exposition of its tenets.

The Constitution Bench decision inspired some other states to enact similar laws. Arunachal Pradesh passed the **Freedom of Religion Act 1978**.

Today there are such laws in about half of our states. Some of these have been either newly enacted or made more stringent. All of them **prohibit** converting people from one to another religion without their **free will**.

What is the way forward on religious conversion?

India should follow the advice of **Mahatma Gandhi** on this matter. He once said that "all faiths are **equally true though equally imperfect**". Instead of converting others to one's own faith, our innermost prayer should be that a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim and a Christian a better Christian".

24. [Women & elections: Low female voting is exception. Few female MLAs is norm](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Women & elections: Low female voting is exception. Few female MLAs is norm**" published in **The Times of India** on **10th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice

Relevance: Women's representation in the legislative bodies

News: The article discusses the dismal conditions of the women in the legislative bodies despite of high percentage of voting.

What is the current percentage of female voters?

The current Gujarat election saw a lesser number of female voters than men. However, there has been an overall increase in the number of female voters.

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For example, the percentage of women was higher in the elections of Himachal Pradesh. The **voter gender gap ratio** also improved in every state in the five assembly elections earlier this year.

Even in the 2019 Lok Sabha election women's turnout was at 67.18% compared to men which were at 67.01%.

Even though there has been an increase in the percentage of female voters, their representation in the legislative bodies is dismal.

What are the reasons behind low female legislators?

There has been less effort in providing women equal representation in the legislative bodies. For example, the **women's reservation bill lapsed** despite being passed by the Rajya Sabha in 2010. One-third reservation has been provided to women in the local body but there is no such efforts for female panchayat leaders to enter into legislative assemblies and Parliament. Further, women also get fewer election seats than men in fighting elections.

Therefore, there is a need to look into the issue and provide equal representation to women in the legislative bodies.

25. What are the existing laws on religious conversions?

Source: The post is based on an article "**What are the existing laws on religious conversions?**" published in **The Hindu** on **12th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: anti-conversion laws and problems associated.

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

Which states have laws for conversion?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What has been the judicial stand on these laws?

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

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

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

26. PROBLEM ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNDERTRIAL

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

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance– Criminal justice system

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

Who are under trial prisoners?

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

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

What is the problem faced by under trials in India?

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

What are the Reforms suggested by The President of India?

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

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27. [CHANGES IN THE MULTISTATE COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES \(AMENDMENT\) BILL, 2022](#)

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

Syllabus: GS2- Development process and development industry

Relevance– Issues related to cooperative societies

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

What are Multi State Cooperatives?

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

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

What are the problems faced by the Multi State Cooperatives?

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

What are the key changes in the Bill?

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS – 2 – Sports sector governance.

Relevance: About improving India’s sports sector.

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

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

What is the significance of the recent IOA election?

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

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What are the challenges with the sports sector in India?

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

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

How India is promoting the sports sector in India?

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS – 2 – Governance.

Relevance: About the delay in Census.

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

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

What is the importance of the Census?

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

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

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

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

How India plans to revamp the census?

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

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

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What should be done?

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

30. [The role of the 'China Test' in India's grand strategy](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “The role of the ‘China Test’ in India’s grand strategy” published in **The Hindu** on **12th December, 2022**

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

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

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

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

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

What more can be the elements of China test?

China test’ consists of three distinct elements:

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

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

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

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

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

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

A complete break away from Russia will strengthen Sino-Russian cooperation and cut India out of the continental space to its north and west. India would loss the discounted energy and

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cheaper defence equipment, benefitting China. Laos, it will not only push Moscow towards Pakistan, but provide China with a growing influence in Central Asia.

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

Source: The post is based on the following articles

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

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

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

Relevance: About the need for legislative reform on POCSO.

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

What is the POCSO Act?

Read here: [POCSO Act](#)

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

Why the CJI is demanding a legislative reform on POCSO?

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

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

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

Why does India need a legislative reform on POCSO?

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

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

What should be done?

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

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

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32. Curbing individualism in public health

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

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

Relevance: Public Healthcare System

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

What is the recent example related to it?

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

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

What are the facts associated with it?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward?

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

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

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

How will the free trade agreement benefit both the nations?

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

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

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

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

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

What are the concerns?

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

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

34. [Politics of national renewal](#)

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

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Democracy related issues.

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

What is the current situation of our evolving democracy?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the solutions to renew our democracy?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Indian polity. GS1- Social empowerment

Relevance– Women in politics

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

What shows the effectiveness of women leadership?

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

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

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

What are the impacts of women reservation in panchayats?

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

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

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

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

What are challenges to women representation in politics?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: ways to utilize India’s soft power

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

What are the key findings of the report?

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

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

What can be the way ahead?

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- India and neighbourhood relations

Relevance– India and China relations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Negotiations by China were a strategy for buying time.

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

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

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

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

What may be the consequences of the current Indian approach?

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance– Challenges faced by higher judiciary

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

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

What is the position of executive today?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the challenges faced by the higher judiciary?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- India and neighbourhood relations

Relevance– India and Chinese relationship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the larger strategic dimensions of Chinese strategy?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why is China not willing for demarcation of LAC?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward for India?

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

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

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

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

Judges recusing from cases without specifying reasons hurts the entire judiciary. SC must frame rules” published in **The Times of India** on **14th November 2022**. **Syllabus:** GS – 2 – Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary. **Relevance:** About the recusal of judges.

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

What is the recusal of judges?

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

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

What are the concerns associated with the recusal of judges?

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

What should be done to reduce recusal of judges?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About the Nari Shakti.

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

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

How is Nari Shakti empowering India at present?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the challenges faced by Nari Shakti?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Separation of powers

Relevance– Issues related to working of the constitution

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What do these events signify?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance– Issues related to Good governance

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

Is the RTI Act fulfilling its purpose?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the challenges faced by the RTI Act?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: Digital revolution in India

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

What path has been taken by India for development?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the future innovation being taken by India?

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

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

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

What can be the course of action?

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

45. Line of Actual Control: Past tense, present uncertain

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

Syllabus: **GS 2 – International Relations**

Relevance: **India – China border dispute**

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

What is the current issue between the two countries?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the counter measures being adopted by India?

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way ahead?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About student suicides in India.

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

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

About students suicides in India

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

About short-sighted recommendations to prevent student suicides in India

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

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

What can be done to reduce student suicides in India?

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

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

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

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

Source: The post is based on the article **“How We Treat Our First Citizens”** published in **The Times of India** on **16th November 2022**.

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

Relevance: About tribal rights.

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

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

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

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

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

How tribal rights are ignored even today?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About economic crisis in Bangladesh.

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

About the iconic economic growth of Bangladesh

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

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

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

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What is the present status of Bangladesh's economy?

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

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

What is the reason for the economic crisis in Bangladesh?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About the clash at LAC

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

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

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

About the opacity in government information while confronting China

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

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

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

The Indian government might have not been informed about the conflict due to reasons such as **1) The army might thought that this clash was not important enough to report to the political establishment, 2) The army might briefed previously, and held the second meeting something**

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

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

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

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

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

[50. We are all responsible for the coaching centre-driven anxiety](#)

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

Syllabus: GS2- Development and management of education

Relevance– Challenges faced by education sector

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward to reduce dependence on coaching?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About court vacations.

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

What are court vacations?

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

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

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

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

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

What happens to important cases during court vacations?

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

What are the arguments in favour of court vacations?

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

What are the various recommendations to reduce court vacations?

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

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

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

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

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

52. India's crushing court backlogs, out-of-the box reform

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

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance– Reforms in judicial process

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Important aspects of governance

Relevance– Issues related to good governance

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward for good governance?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Governance**

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

What is the current problem with GST?

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

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

What are the penalties provided under the GST Law?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why did the Parliament include punishments in the GST law?

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

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

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

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

What will be the impact of decriminalisation?

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

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

What are the other recommended measures to facilitate trade?

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

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

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

What is the way ahead?

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About prohibition movements in states.

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

What are the challenges associated with prohibition?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should be done instead of prohibition movements?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About anti-conversion legislation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

57. [Criminalising consensual relationships](#)

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

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of population

Relevance– Issues related to adolescent population

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance– India foreign policy in changing world order

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

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

What is the conventional notion of world leadership?

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

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

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

India has the world's fourth-strongest army.

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

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

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

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

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

What are the new dynamics of international politics?

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

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

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

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

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

What is the unique position of India in global affairs?

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

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

What is the way forward for India foreign policy?

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relation

Relevance: India and China border issue

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

What is the present condition of the Indian Army?

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way ahead?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About prohibition movements in states.

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

About prohibition in Bihar

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

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

What are the challenges associated with prohibition?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Appointment to various constitutional post

Relevance– Issues related to free and fair elections

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

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

What is the classical understanding of modern democracy?

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

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

What has changed in contemporary times for modern democracy?

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

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

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

What are the practices followed by other countries?

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

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

What is the case of India democracy?

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

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

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

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

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

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

62. The new normal in the Indo-Pacific contestation

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

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Indo-pacific

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

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

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

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

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

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

After Galwan, New Delhi has re-energised **diplomatic efforts** in its backyard. In the Maldives, New Delhi is reciprocating President Ibrahim Solih’s ‘**India First**’ policy with massive **economic assistance, grants**, and infrastructure projects. It is also cooperating on **maritime security**.

In Nepal, Prime Minister Modi’s government has attempted to improve Nepal’s overall **bilateral relations** with India.

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

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

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

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

How are these actions perceived by India and China?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance– Global cooperation in field of new agenda for healthcare

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

What are the initiatives by G20 for the healthcare system?

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

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

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

What is the concept of Universal Healthcare?

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

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

How has the PHC-with-UHC approach developed?

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

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

What is the PHC-with-UHC approach?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Research designed for validation of traditional systems.

Pharmaceutical and vaccines production capacity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance– Issues related to democratic governance

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

What are issues with the draft Data Protection Bill?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: The post is based on the following articles

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

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

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

Relevance: About Inter-State disputes.

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

What is the Karnataka-Maharashtra border dispute?

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

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

What are the challenges in resolving inter-State disputes?

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

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

What should be done to resolve inter-State disputes?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About India's China problem.

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

About the 1962 China-India war

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

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

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

Why India's China problem is worrying?

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

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

Note

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

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

How India can solve India's China problem?

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About India's edtech ecosystem.

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

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

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

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

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

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 'gamification': AI has the ability to create impactful solutions for learning. AI can foster real-time collaborative learning experiences between different student communities, thereby overcoming the traditional constraints of space, time and geography.

Simulated labs, experiential centres and 'gamified' content can become the preferred modes for students to explore academics.

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

What are the advantages of India's edtech ecosystem?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[68. How Not To Teach – Too many schools are still tolerating corporal punishment. This must end](#)

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

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

Relevance: About corporal punishment.

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

What is corporal punishment?

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

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

How can India remove corporal punishment altogether?

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About the high cost of cancer treatment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What explains the high cost of cancer treatment?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

70. Benchmarks for ECs' appointments

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

Syllabus: GS2- Appointment to various constitutional post

Relevance: About the appointment of Election Commissioners

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

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

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

According to **B.R. Ambedkar** “However good a **Constitution** may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a **Constitution** may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot. The **working of a Constitution** does not depend wholly upon the **nature of the Constitution.**”

According to **Rajendra Prasad** “Whatever the Constitution may or may not provide, the **welfare of the country** will depend upon the way in which the country is administered. The **Constitution**, like a machine, is a **lifeless thing**. It acquires life because of the men who control it. India needs today nothing more than a **set of honest men** who will have the interest of the country before them.

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward for the appointment of ECs?

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

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

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

Source: The post is based on the following articles

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About Covid surge in China.

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

About the recent Covid surge in China

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should India do to prevent the next covid surge?

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

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

72. Strengthening urban local bodies

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

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

Relevance: About Strengthening urban local bodies.

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

About India’s urban local bodies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How to improve the financial condition of urban local bodies?

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: alcohol ban in Bihar and issues with it

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

How has been the condition of Bihar after banning alcohol?

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

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

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

What has been the impact of alcohol ban on Bihar?

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

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

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

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

What can be the course of action for Bihar?

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance- Indo-Japan defence cooperation

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

What led to the formation of AUKUS?

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

What are the limitations of nuclear submarines operated by India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward?

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance– International economic relations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How is the international economic order changing?

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

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

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

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

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

What will be the implications of the new economic order?

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

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

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

76. Reshaping the world's responses to the terror matrix

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

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Issues related to global terrorism

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

How has the concept of terrorism changed in recent times?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How is the world responding to threats of terrorism?

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

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

What can be the implications of this cold response?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance: Issues related to the disabled population.

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

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

What are the issues with the Accessible India campaign?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Central and state level procurement laws and policies must incorporate **accessibility criteria** in public procurement. Tender documents must set out applicable **accessibility standards**.

The deficiencies in the **Sugamya Bharat app** should be rectified so as to enable a well-meaning intervention to realise its full potential.

The Department of Disability must take the lead in ensuring that **accessibility targets** are met.

78. [Major questions about minors](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Major questions about minors**” published in **The Indian Express** on **24th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Laws and mechanisms for vulnerable sections of the population.

Relevance: Issue related to the adolescent population

News: The article explains the issue of criminalisation of consensual sexual activity between adolescents by misusing the provisions of POCSO Act.

What is the POCSO Act?

Read here: [POCSO Act](#)

What are the issues with the POCSO Act?

POCSO blends **exploitative sexual practice** and **general sexual expression** by an adolescent. This has become an instrument to silence or regulates a **non-exploitative consensual sexual relationship** involving a minor girl, which is voluntary.

It causes **the victimisation of the “consenting girl”**. POCSO, MTP and the Child Marriage Act create a **complex socio-legal web** that deprives the minor girl of the **rights to dignity, liberty, and sexual and reproductive health**, and undermines her privacy.

It leads to **poor sexual awareness** among young girls.

The law disregards the likelihood of a minor girl engaging in sexual activity voluntarily. It ignores **social reality**. According to the **NFHS-5**, for instance, 39% women had their first sexual experience before turning 18.

As per **NCRB data**, the number of juveniles apprehended under the **POCSO Act** in the country has seen a **staggering jump of 180%** between 2017- 2021. Criminalising underage sexuality burdens the already-overburdened courts.

What has been the approach of higher courts in this matter?

The Madras, Delhi and Meghalaya High Courts have raised concerns over the **criminalisation of romantic relationships** between or with an adolescent under POCSO.

The Madras High Court in **Vijayalakshmi v State (2021)** made it imperative to draw a line demarcating the nature of acts that should not be made to fall within the scope of this stringent law.

In **Dharmendra Singh v State Govt of NCT (2020)**, the Delhi High Court has attempted to increase the chances of bail of an accused, in case there is tacit approval by the girl and the age difference between the victim and the offender are less.

Prima facie the judiciary seems to have a **sympathetic approach** in cases where the outcome of the love affair is marriage. However, courts are reluctant to grant bail in matters of a love affair with a minor girl gone bad.

Read more: [Why Parliament must reexamine POCSO](#)

What is the way forward?

There is a need to evolve a **separate procedure** for children while dealing with POCSO cases. The relief accorded by a few high courts to adolescent youth is disproportionate to the harm and harassment caused for fault of falling in love with a girl.

79. [Fighting cancer – Along with vaccination, screening must be done to detect early signs of HPV](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **“Fighting cancer – Along with vaccination, screening must be done to detect early signs of HPV”** published in **The Hindu** on **24th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice

Relevance: Measures taken by India to prevent cervical cancer.

News: The Indian government has decided to roll out vaccination for girls aged between 9 and 14 years through schools to fight cervical cancer. A study in the Lancet also suggests the rising of cervical cancer among women.

What is cervical cancer?

It is caused by infection with the human papillomavirus (**HPV**) and there are vaccines which protect against carcinogenic HPV. **It is a preventable and treatable cancer.**

[Click here to read more](#)

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What are the key findings of the Lancet report?

India accounts for the highest number of cervical cancer cases in Asia followed by China. More than 58% of all cases of cervical cancer and deaths globally were estimated in Asia. India accounted for 21% of cases and 23% of deaths followed by China.

Due to these concerns, **WHO** has come up with several guidelines. It has specified that countries must reach and maintain an incidence rate of fewer than 4 new cases of cervical cancer per 1,00,000 women a year.

Therefore, it is necessary that 90% of girls be fully vaccinated with the HPV vaccine by the age of 15 to achieve this goal.

What steps are being taken by India to prevent cervical cancer?

The government has decided to introduce the HPV vaccine in the Universal Immunisation Programme (**UIP**).

UIP is one of the largest public health programmes targeting over 2 crore newborns and 2 crore pregnant women annually and offers **free vaccines for at least 12 diseases**.

India is also expected to roll out the indigenously developed **Cervavac vaccine** by mid-2023. The vaccination will be provided primarily through schools.

The government will reach those girls who do not go to school through **community outreach and mobile teams**.

This is an important step because studies show that there is a link between cervical cancer incidence and human development index values. The incidence of **cervical cancer decreases as HDI improves**.

Further, there is also a need for **screening programmes** to be conducted to detect early signs of the disease to allow time for treatment.

India has to eliminate cervical cancer like it has eliminated diseases such as polio, maternal and neonatal tetanus, etc.

80. [Alleviating the scourge of private healthcare](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Alleviating the scourge of private healthcare**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues related to the development and management of health

Relevance: Issues related to affordable and accessible healthcare

News: The article explains the dominant role of the private sector and its dispersed nature. It also explains other challenges that make healthcare unaffordable.

What are the issues faced by the healthcare system in India?

There is a dominant role in the **private health sector**. Its public health expenditure as a percentage of its GDP is 1.28%. The share of **general government expenditure** dedicated to health is 4.8% which remains akin to the poorest countries. **Private spending** still constitutes nearly 60% of overall expenditure on health.

The private sector in India is dispersed. There exist **inequities** between rural and urban areas and widespread **market failure**. The private sector is **differentiated** into a host of organisations of varying sizes and scopes.

Each of these organisations is serving its own customer base. These often provide care at apparently **inexpensive rates**. But it is of **dubious quality**. Such a situation provides few natural incentives for **consolidation**.

Healthcare provision in cities tells about the stark **market failure** in healthcare. The booming number of providers in cities has increased the cost of healthcare.

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Indian healthcare faces **regulatory challenges and unfulfilled economic promises**. For instance, many States have their own **Clinical Establishments Acts** that are stuck short of full implementation.

The high costs of medical education trigger cost recovery through **resource-intensive ways** of practice.

What is the way forward to improve the healthcare system?

Affordable private healthcare: There is a need for initiatives that seek to make private healthcare more **affordable** without affecting **care quality**. This is likely to encompass a wide range of **policy instruments** that alter the operating conditions of the private sector. Such policies have to be enshrined in our **national health policy**.

This should not be confused with driving public funds into **public-private partnerships**. Rather, India needs overarching policies that drive down private healthcare costs even for the self-paying consumer with little or no government subsidy.

Innovations in healthcare: There is a need to incentivise and propagate many **business process innovations (BPI)** that lie scattered across the healthcare landscape such as the cost-reducing innovations by Aravind Eye Clinic and Narayana Hrudayalaya.

The healthcare ecosystem does not naturally **incentivise** such innovations. **Regulatory and economic policy signals** can be facilitative.

Task shifting in healthcare: It is an **evidence-based instrument** to cut costs, especially in under-resourced settings. The National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Act, 2021 can be a boost in this direction. Widening the ambit of the practice of nurses and allied personnel should be a strong emphasis of health policy.

Setting health boards: There is a need to set up regional health boards that organise care equitably within regions, exploit **economies of scale**, and bring down **healthcare costs**. Such boards should have adequate representation from communities.

These boards should have enough power to **determine local policy** and **resource allocation**, impose caps on the maximum number of healthcare providers, and build working **networks of care**.

Affordable medical education: The high cost of medical education needs policy attention.

Strong public healthcare: The need for making private healthcare more affordable can not be denied. But, it can not substitute adequate public spending on health. Affordable private healthcare must only come to supplement strong public healthcare.

81. [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 **26th 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?

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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.

82. [Constitutional silences, unconstitutional inaction](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article "**Constitutional silences, unconstitutional inaction**", published in **The Hindu** on **26th 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

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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.

[83. 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 **26th December 2022**.

"A welcome move" published in **The Hindu** on 26th 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

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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.

84. [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?

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?

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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**.

[85. 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.

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.

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86. [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.

87. [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.

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.

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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.

88. [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.

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 cryptoscam. Joblessness due to COVID-19 was responsible for it.

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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**.

89. 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 **28th 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?

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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.

90. [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 **28th 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.

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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.

91. 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 **28th 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.

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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”.

92. 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 **28th 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.

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.

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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.

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.

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93. [Labour wages – Any delay in funds to be paid to States for MGNREGS payments is unethical](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Labour 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.

94. [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 Behar, party in power will undertake another pan-state yatra. In Rajasthan also, opposition has been on a Jan Aakrosh Yatra since December 1.

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?

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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.

95. [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?

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.

96. [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.

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?

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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**.

97. 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](#)

98. [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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99. [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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100. [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.

101. [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

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General Studies - 3

1. [Size Matters – Naval power will determine India’s military capability. And bigger aircraft carriers are vital](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Size Matters – Naval power will determine India’s military capability. And bigger aircraft carriers are vital**” published in **The Times of India** on **5th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Security challenges and their management in the border areas.

Relevance: About the procurement of IAC-2.

News: Recently, India’s navy chief Admiral has said that India’s second indigenous aircraft carrier could be a repeat order of the recently commissioned IAC-1 or INS Vikrant.

What is the importance of the Admiral’s statement?

This means that the proposed IAC-2 would most likely not be the 65,000-tonne carrier that was initially planned and will be around the sub-45,000-tonne range. This has ramifications for the Indian ambition to have a blue water navy and obtain deep-strike capabilities.

The tonne reduction highlights **budgetary constraints** such as increased social welfare programmes and the armed forces huge salary and pension bills.

What are the implications of reducing the IAC-2 capacity?

The bigger the carrier the more equipment and offensive platforms – fighter jets and attack helicopters – it can be packed with. For example, the 40,000-tonne IAC-1 can carry about 35 aircraft. A 65,000-tonne carrier can carry almost 50 aircraft.

China’s indigenous aircraft carriers, Shandong and Fujian, are both above 60,000-tonnes.

How to improve India’s critical military platforms?

Given the maritime challenge in the Indian Ocean Region from China India need to improve its critical military platforms. This can be done by

-India’s economy needs to grow faster if it is to meet its strategic military needs.

-**Focussing on the serious naval components:** For instance, having heavy-load aircraft carriers in the 60,000-tonne category is a vital part of critical military reorientation.

2. [Emerging AI: What awaits us?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Emerging AI: What awaits us?**” published in the **Business Standard** on **5th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Science and Technology.

Relevance: About the lessons from the chemical revolution to the AI revolution.

News: The chemical revolution started in a small way in the late 18th century, and rose to a peak in the 1960s.

What are the key developments of the chemical revolution?

-Synthetic **chemical fertilisers and pesticides** came into force in the early 1900s and helped increase food output dramatically and thus served to prevent starvation.

-In the early 20th century, **synthetic chemical drugs** such as penicillin, and vaccines against measles, mumps, chickenpox, rubella, and hepatitis saved the world from a wide variety of diseases.

-Innovation around the properties of combustion of gases led to the invention of the **internal combustion engine** and thus the birth of motorised vehicles like cars.

-In the 1960s **chiffon sarees** made from polyester or nylon became the rage in India.

-The spread of chemical technology was a **boom to the manufacturers** of toothpaste and washing soaps and liquids and such conveniences of day-to-day life.

-**Creative advertising** led to the sale of “commoditised” products of the chemical revolution.

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What are the impacts of the chemical revolution?

- a) The availability of chemical technology was so widespread that **manufacturers were unable to differentiate** their products on real physical features
- b) The chemical revolution slowly faded away to such an extent that **anything “plastic” has become synonymous with “pollution”**. Thus, demands are made that only “recyclable” plastics be used.
- c) The synthetic cloths impacted the cotton textile spinning and weaving mills and **created a job loss**. In Bombay alone, over 100 cotton textile mills shut down.

What one can learn from the chemical revolution to the emerging AI revolution?

- India needs to analyse
- a) New industries AI will create and current industries AI will demolish,
 - b) Jobs AI market will create and job loss it will reduce,
 - c) Thoughtful policy initiatives for promoting the use of AI.

3. [COP27: Joining the dots between Binsar and Sharm El-Sheikh](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“COP27: Joining the dots between Binsar and Sharm El-Sheikh”** published in the **Indian Express** on **5th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Climate Change.

Relevance: About the inconclusive deliberations at the COP27.

News: Inconclusive deliberations at the COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh will increase the impacts of climate change.

Why COP27 failed to achieve universal target?

The COP27 agreed to establish a compensatory fund for the poor countries impacted by global warming. But it failed to do more than agreeing.

Multiple stakeholders at the conference were not aligned on “values” and the “value” of the various action plans presented by them.

All this is because all **nations tries to define a central path**.

Read more: [COP27: Outcomes and Concerns – Explained, pointwise](#)

What needs to be done?

“Values” have to be brought into convergence before the tension between development and ecology can be sustainably resolved. This can be done by

Following Gandhian principles of economics: Gandhi emphasised on **decentralised interventions**. As these can leverage local talent, crafts and the environment. If the objective is to create income generating opportunities and secure jobs without disturbing the natural ecology then Gandhian economics is the way.

This can be followed by looking for local initiatives to gain initial momentum. Later scale them and provide market access through the support of government and collaborative linkages with corporates, NGOs and specialists.

Read more: [COP-27 commits to compensation fund, but leaves important questions for later](#)

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4. [Why has the Reserve Bank of India introduced an e-rupee?](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Why has the Reserve Bank of India introduced an e-rupee?**” published in **The Hindu** on **5th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: concerns associated with digital rupee

News: The Reserve Bank of India has launched the digital rupee on a pilot basis.

What is the digital rupee?

Must Read: [RBI unveils features of digital rupee, plans to launch pilot soon](#)

What is the difference between digital and physical form of rupee?

Both forms of rupee are same and deposits held in banks can be converted into digital rupees and vice-versa.

However, the difference is that interests are paid on the deposits held by banks but there will be **no interests paid on digital rupees** stored in the wallet.

What is the need of the digital rupee?

Must Read: [Do we really need the e-rupee?](#)

What is the risk associated with the digital rupee?

Banks generate loans depending on the amount of money, it has but people might shift away their deposits from banks to wallets looking at the low interest offered by the banks.

This shifting will **hinder the activities of the banks** especially in the case of giving loans. It should be noted that the ability of banks to create loans is influenced by the amount of cash they hold.

However, the virtual money **will reduce bank’s dependencies** on maintaining sufficient cash deposits before expanding loans. This can help banks to get free from the risk of **bank runs** which acted as a restraint for the banks for expanding loans.

What are the arguments against the digital rupee?

Some of the people are against the idea of digital rupee. They say that digital currencies will give power to central banks to supervise economic activities.

This could act as hindrance to economic growth if certain economic activities are considered illegal by governments.

Further, digital currencies cannot replace crypto currencies as private cryptocurrencies have demand against certain investors because of their greater purchasing power than the fiat currency.

5. [Traffickers are moving online in search of victims](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Traffickers are moving online in search of victims**” published in **The Hindu** on **5th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Challenges to internal security,. GS2- Vulnerable sections

Relevance– Issue of trafficking

News– The article explains the issue of use of online mediums for trafficking of children and women.

What are the new mechanisms used by traffickers?

Due to Covid-19 restrictions over the past two years, traffickers are using **online classrooms, gaming platforms, matrimonial sites, dating apps** and even **loan apps** for potential victims.

According to the US based **National Center for Missing and Exploited children’s Cyber tipline report for 2021**, India reports 4.69 million reports of online abuse of children. It is the highest of any country.

A study shows that 44% of respondents started using internet after outbreak of Covid-19

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How children and women are abused through online mediums?

The study conducted by **Space2Glow and Cyber Peace Foundation** shows that among those who felt uncomfortable during online interactions, 8% relented to sender requests after repeatedly saying no to them. These are at serious risk of abuse.

The **modus operandi** of operators ranging from luring somebody through relationships, blackmailing them by morphing their social media photographs and offering loans which are difficult to pay back in cash.

Child grooming which encompasses access and isolation, trust building, desensitization, and forcing them into trafficking are tactics used by abusers.

What is the way forward to stop trafficking?

There is a need for **better awareness** among women and children.

Better training of law enforcement agencies and technology platforms are required.

There is a need for **capability building** of law enforcement officials.

Legal deterrence through enhanced detection mechanisms for online and human interface is required.

6. [From a vicious cycle to virtuous cycle](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**From a vicious cycle to virtuous cycle**” published in **The Hindu** on **5th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilization of resources

Relevance– Informal economy

News– The article explains the new concept of returnable grant for fulfilling the credit needs of the informal sector.

What are the issues faced by informal sector workers for accessing working loans?

They face challenges in raising **working capital**.

They cannot get even a small personal loan because they lack the papers and collaterals required for access to **formal credit**.

Unable to borrow, the working poor cannot establish their **credit history**. They are not able to learn how to manage their debts and invest the loans in productive expenditure.

In this process, they are excluded from the **formal credit economy**.

What is the new financial instrument called a returnable grant?

It is developed by **Samhita Social Ventures and Collective Good Foundation**. It is supported by philanthropic funding.

Recipients receive a grant with ticket size tailored to their needs. Unlike conventional grants, there is an exception to repayment of grants.

Beneficiaries are told that timely return of grant will allow the foundation to support other workers like themselves. They also get additional benefits such as **interest rate subsidies** or access to skilling or insurance products.

The grants are disbursed in partnership with civil society organisations that have prior relationships with beneficiaries.

The foundation invested in a **rigorous evaluation framework** that utilised third party organisations to collect data on individual recipients.

What are the findings from analysis of data?

The most striking finding is that the **repayment rate** is high. This was despite the fact that there was no **legal obligation** to repay and since it was interest free.

The recipients also used the grants to invest in their **economic future**.

What are the useful insights from the RG experience?

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It is critical to work with **implementation partners** which have long-term relationships and are deeply embedded in communities being served.

Working with partners willing to make regular calls to beneficiaries to check on their progress and provide timely reminders of their **repayment obligations** yields benefits.

Providing **flexible and customised repayment obligations** are key to maintaining high repayment rates.

How can RG experience be utilised for the benefits of informal workers?

The RG experience can help to create a pathway to a **formal credit system** for informal workers. The repayment data from the RG can be used to create a **pre-credit score** to make a **starter loan for informal sector workers**. These starter loans could be supported by **credit guarantees or interest subventions** using philanthropic funding in order to **incentivise** banks to get started.

7. [Poor soil management will erode food security](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Poor soil management will erode food security**” published in **The Hindu** on **5th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- India geography

Relevance– Issues related to soil conservation and management

News– The article explains the issue of soil degradation in India

What is the importance of healthy soil?

They support **healthy plant growth** to enhance our nutrition and water percolation to maintain groundwater level.

It helps to **regulate planet climate** by storing carbon.

They help to maintain a landscape that is **more resilient** to impacts of droughts and floods.

What are the causes behind soil degradation?

Main drivers contributing to soil degradation are industrial activities, mining, waste treatment, agriculture, fossil fuel extraction and processing and transport emissions.

Excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides, and irrigation with contaminated wastewater are also polluting soils.

What are the consequences of soil degradation? It undermines nutrition and food security globally.

It threatens **agriculture productivity, biodiversity conservation**, water quality and **socio-economic** well being of the dependent population.

Nearly 3.7 million hectares suffer from nutrient loss in soils.

What are the initiatives taken by the Indian government for soil conservation?

Government is implementing a **five-pronged strategy**. It includes making soil chemical free, saving soil productivity, enhancing SOM, maintaining soil moisture, mitigating soil degradation and preventing soil erosion.

Government launched the **Soil Health Card scheme** in 2015. It displays the soil health indicators and guides farmers.

Another initiative is the **PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana** to prevent **soil erosion**, and for **rainwater harvesting** and recharging of groundwater.

The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture has schemes promoting **traditional indigenous practices** such as organic farming and natural farming.

What are initiatives taken by FAO in India for soil conservation?

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It is collaborating with the **National Rainfed Area Authority** and **Ministry of Agriculture** to develop forecasting tools using **data analytics** that will aid vulnerable farmers in making **informed decisions** on crop choices.

FAO in association with MoRD supports the **DAY-NRLM Community Resources persons** to increase their capacity towards supporting on-farm livelihoods for adoption of **sustainable and resilient practices, organic certification and agri-nutri gardens**.

In Andhra Pradesh, FAO is partnering with the state government and ICAR to support farmers in **sustainable transitions to agro-ecological approaches** and organic farming.

What is the way forward to reduce the soil degradation?

There is a need to strengthen the **communication channels** between academia, policymakers and society for **identification, management and restoration** of degraded soil as well as adoption of anticipatory measures.

Greater cooperation and partnerships are central to ensure the availability of knowledge, sharing of successful practices and **universal access** to clean and sustainable technologies.

8. [The lingering crisis of labour post-pandemic](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**The lingering crisis of labour post-pandemic**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economic Development

Relevance: rising income inequalities post-pandemic

News: **Global Wage Report 2022-2023 and Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2022** are the two reports released by the International Labour Organisation (**ILO**) recently. Both these reports gave an indication of the global employment scenario post-pandemic.

What are the findings of the report?

Growth: As per the reports, **the nominal wages in India** rose to ₹17,017 per month in 2021 from ₹4,398 in 2006.

However, the **real wage growth** in India declined to -0.2% in 2021 from 9.3% in 2006 when inflation is taken into consideration. This negative growth in India started after the pandemic.

The growth for **China** also decreased from 5.6% in 2019 to 2% in 2022 and for **Pakistan** the growth was -3.8%.

Cost of Living: The reports highlighted that the increasing cost of living has the greatest impact on **lower-income earners** because they have to spend most of their income on rising prices of essential goods and services.

Employment: As per the report, **only high-skill occupations** saw a recovery after the COVID-19 crisis at the Asia-Pacific level which raises concerns **about rising inequality**. There is an employment gain of 1.6% among high-skill workers between 2019 and 2021 but there is no such substantial gain among low-to-medium-skill workers.

Gap amongst G-20 countries: There is a significant gap in the average level of real wages between advanced G-20 countries and emerging G-20 countries such as India.

What can be the course of action?

The ILO in reports have provided the following remedies for the problem –

a) improvement in the nominal wages of the employee will help in safeguarding the standard of living of households and cushion them against the rising inflation in the future, **b)** there is a need to strengthen labour market institutions and wage policies, **c)** there is a need to create decent formal wage employment for equitable and sustainable wage growth, **d)** decrease in gender pay gap with a multilateral approach that focus on mitigating climate change, decreasing inequalities, poverty, etc. is needed.

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9. [Reforming distorted markets will enhance India competitiveness](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Reforming distorted markets will enhance India competitiveness**” published in the **mint** on **6th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and growth

Relevance– Economic policy for better growth and related issues

News– The article explains the competitiveness related issues of Indian economy

How has the competitiveness of the Indian economy made a substantial improvement in recent years?

There have been notable developments in sectors like access to education, infrastructure development and quality of business environment.

According to **World Bank data**, the percentage of population with **access to electricity** has increased from 83.9% in 2014 to 99% in 2020.

Since the beginning of **PM Gram Sadak Yojana**, nearly 700000 kms road length has been completed.

From 2014 to 2020, the number of universities has increased from 723 to 1043.

In the last 5 years, the **student enrollment** in higher education witnessed an increase of 11.4%.

The food production has registered a rise from around 252 million tonnes in 2014-15 to 316 million tonnes in 2021-22.

What are some of the competitiveness challenges faced by the Indian economy?

Market structures– The key competitiveness challenge lies in the build of our **market structures**. India has focussed on improving inputs. The market structures that translate these inputs into actual outcomes experience **distortions** at various levels. It occurs when interventions in demand and supply dynamics lead to **misallocation of resources**.

A **World Bank report** on the power sector suggests that India’s **efficiency gap** is about 4% of GDP a year. It points to electricity subsidies, inefficient power **generation, transmission and distribution** as some of the factors contributing to power shortages.

Similarly, there is huge distortion in the education sector. **Inputs** in terms of infrastructure and enrollment have seen positive trends. But this has not translated into better **learning outcomes**.

Business environment– It is another area where **market distortions** exist. **Individual rules** have been improved. But, **underlying structures and capacity** of the public sector behind **regulatory burden** were weak.

What are some steps taken by the government to improve the competitiveness of the economy?

The PM Shri scheme aims to develop 14500 select schools by providing high-quality education keeping **inclusivity and equitable outcomes** central.

Udyam portal for MSME and National Logistics policy framework are some of initiatives to make market structures more efficient.

10. [Climate talks as shortchanging international law](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“**Climate talks as shortchanging international law**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th November 2022**.

“**Climate finance must take centre-stage in global action**” published in the **Livemint** on **6th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Climate Change.

Relevance: About the climate negotiations.

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News: In the climate negotiations areas of interest to developing countries are not covered or sparsely covered, while other areas are over-regulated. For instance, in COP27, there seems to be a concerted effort to fraudulently change the basic structure of the Climate Treaty.

Must read: [Climate Reparation: Loss and Damage – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the problems with the current climate negotiation process?

Not enough awareness among developed countries: Citizens in developed countries are not even aware that two-thirds of their national emissions of carbon dioxide come from their diet, transport, and residential and commercial sectors. All these together constitute the major share of the developed country's GDP.

Ignores global well-being: Global well-being will require **a)** Urbanisation of the developing country's population, **b)** Fossil fuels for infrastructure and energy needs of developing countries to achieve global well-being.

Need essential supplies which emit CO2: The developing countries need vast quantities of cement and steel for infrastructure as they urbanise.

Does not address the dilemma of developing countries: Developing countries such as India are both victims and perpetrators of Climate Change. In such a scenario, separating their roles, especially in the context of financing is complicated. For instance, many nations have suggested that India and China should be part of the contributing list of nations to the L&D fund.

Read more: [COP27 agreement on loss and damage is significant, but the meeting did not address several other pressing issues](#)

How the climate treaty failed to bring equitable climate negotiation?

The objective of the Climate Treaty is to avoid a concentration of cumulative emissions of carbon dioxide, prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system and enable sustainable economic development. But the treaty failed to bring equitable climate negotiation because,

-The negotiation process adopted a manner that rejected historical responsibility for a continuing problem and **shifted the burden to China and India.**

-The **agenda** was set around globalised material flows and **not about the wasteful use of energy.**

-Public finance is used as a means to secure a political objective, and not to solve the problem. For instance, the \$100 billion mitigation and adaptation fund promised in Paris has not materialised. Meanwhile, estimates suggest that about \$200 billion a year is needed now and that will rise to about \$300 billion a year by 2030.

In such a situation, new funding for 'Loss and Damage' will be from a "mosaic of solutions", constituting a **breach of trust.**

-**Longer-term trend has been ignored:** Asia's emissions with half the world's population will rise to 40% in 2035. This will create pressures to further reduce emissions and displace their human rights.

-In Glasgow, in 2021, negotiators zeroed in on **coal to reduce future emissions.** This ignored the key finding of the IPCC on the centrality of the carbon budget.

Note: *Carbon budgets can be estimated accurately from climate models. They are the most useful for the policy as they couple the climate with the economy.*

-In the recent COP27, there has been **no consensus on the obligation of industrial countries** to compensate vulnerable countries for loss and damage fund.

Read more: [Loss and Damage decisions, pitfalls and promises](#)

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What India can do to mitigate climate change when climate negotiations are poor?

India should **a)** Combine technology transfers and soft loans from multi-lateral institutions, **b)** Adopt market solutions for climate actions, **c)** Carefully design cess schemes to discourage GHG emissions, **d)** Improve the domestic fuel economy, **e)** Accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles, **f)** Levy a carbon tax at the point of emission, and **g)** Raise the economy's overall energy efficiency. On moral grounds, India can **contribute to the L&D fund in a gradually increasing manner.**

11. [DESH & 'videsh' – The proposed Bill will create asymmetries](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“DESH & 'videsh' – The proposed Bill will create asymmetries”** published in the **Business Standard** on **6th November 2022.**

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: About the draft DESH Bill.

News: The finance ministry has reportedly raised concerns about the Development Enterprise and Services Hub (DESH) Bill's extension of tax concessions to special economic zones.

About the Development Enterprise and Services Hub (DESH) Bill 2022

Read here: [Draft Development of Enterprise and Service Hubs \(DESH\) Bill: SEZs to be turned into mfg hubs for domestic markets](#)

Why does India need to replace the SEZ Act of 2005?

The draft DESH bill seeks to replace the SEZ Act of 2005. The Act aims to emulate China's export-driven manufacturing strategy that transformed that country within a mere quarter-century. But the Act did not produce enough results because

a) Private sector-driven SEZ developers leveraged the tax arbitrage to create a massive real estate play, **b)** SEZ locations were not always optimal for export-oriented industries. For instance, large tracts of SEZs often comprise fertile farmland, and **c)** Supply eventually surpassed demand.

Hence, the draft DESH Bill seeks to maximise infrastructure use and enhance India's export competitiveness.

What are the concerns highlighted by the finance ministry on the draft DESH Bill?

The issue of differential tax treatment: An SEZ is deemed “a customs territory outside India” and were liable for full customs duties plus integrated goods and services tax. But under the draft DESH bill, the SEZ units in the notified areas will be permitted to sell in the domestic tariff area (DTA).

This would create business units each of which would have a “DESH” area and “Videsh” area with differential tax treatments.

Create an outbreak of tax disputes: India's existing tax laws are complex and contentious. The intra-unit variances were likely to create an explosion of tax disputes that will defeat the purpose of the new Bill.

Havoc for industrial units located outside the SEZs: DESH units producing the same goods as DTA units can enjoy tax breaks. This will create an inherent disadvantage for DTA units.

Does not address the problem with SEZ Act: Land acquisition by the private sector has proven a near-intractable problem to date. The DESH Bill does not address this issue.

Read more: [Logistics Sector in India and National Logistics Policy – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done?

A more universal approach to the problem of deficient infrastructure, red tape, and arbitrary and unpredictable policy intervention will benefit the country far more than reviving a largely unsuccessful attempt to reproduce China's success.

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12. [About energy transition: A slow and flawed transition](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A slow and flawed transition**” published in the **Business Standard** on **6th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Energy.

Relevance: About the energy transition.

News: The developed world has reduced its primary energy consumption and they are working on an energy transition. They shift most of the energy-intensive manufacturing to developing countries, where energy consumption is accelerating.

What are the challenges associated with energy transition?

Energy transitions are **not similar to technological transitions**. For instance, within 15 years, 90% of consumers in the West had switched to smartphones. Within 20 years, 50% of the developing world had internet access.

On the other hand, within this same 20-year period, despite all the cost reduction and policy support, wind and solar combined accounted for less than 5% of primary energy consumption.

Continued reliance on fossil fuels: The world relies on fossil fuels for 90% of its primary energy consumption in 1990. Today, it was around 83%. According to the International Energy Agency, fossil fuel reliance will remain at over 60%, even in 2050, unless the world drastically accelerates behavioural change.

Not enough attention on mass electrification: The media and investors focus on solar and wind investment. But they are not focussing on the challenge of how to electrify large parts of the economy and mass electrification.

Low focus on transmission investments: The world at present is focussing more on the strengthening of the grid but not on energy transmission investments.

Electricity as a percentage of energy use: Over the last 20 years, electricity as a percentage of energy use has risen only 2-3% in most major economies. No major economy has an electricity share of more than 20% in total energy use.

Transportation: Looking at the combined data for the US/Europe and China, electricity today accounts for only about 2% of the transport energy consumed. Even in 2040, EVs will constitute only 40% of the vehicles on the road.

The US has the lowest gasoline prices of any major economy and does not seem to have the political will to put in place the tax structure needed to shift preference to EVs.

Read more: [Just Energy Transition Partnership\(JETP\): India-G7 JETP stuck over coal, Centre's insistence on own transition plan](#)

What can be done to ensure just energy transition?

The world has to **move electricity production entirely to renewables** and then **electrify other parts of the economy** like industrial production, transport and residential heating, all large direct consumers of fossil fuels. For instance, even today, renewables as a percentage of electricity generation were only 20-25% in the US/China but 45% in Europe.

Need new investments: The world needs new investments to change the process and add specialised equipment for the energy transition in energy-intensive manufacturing of products such as cement, steel, plastics, chemicals and fertilisers.

Residential and commercial heating: In this, the world needs to move to a newer technology of electric heat pumps in buildings.

Read more: [The real issue at COP27 is energy security](#)

Overall, massive investments will have to be made for just energy transition and every investor will have to focus on their value chain to make it feasible.

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13. [Delhi choking, but do not blame stubble burning alone](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Delhi choking, but do not blame stubble burning alone**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: concerns and measures needed to address air pollution in Delhi

News: The pollution in Delhi every year around winter is a serious concern that needs to be addressed as it has serious health concerns.

What are the problems with the polluted air?

India now reports 2.5 million air pollution-related deaths annually. Pollution makes throats and eyes burn.

Some pollutants are so small that they enter the bloodstream impacting almost every organ in the body causing heart attack and other serious health problems.

Why has there been no change in the air quality of Delhi?

The reason behind no change is that every year the same measures are tried to address the issue without evaluating the effectiveness of the previous measures.

For example, the Government formed the Commission for Air Quality Management. It issued the same orders like the Ministry and the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority did.

These repeated ineffective guidelines make government to prohibit people from going outside, closing schools, banning entrance of trucks and construction activities every year. These lead to bad governance.

What are the reasons behind the bad air quality of Delhi?

Stubble burning: It is one of the major problems which government has tried to solve over years. However, those measures have not been successful. **For example**, Happy Seeder based solution has not been effective.

Biomass burning: The burning of biomass around Delhi is another major reason for the pollution. However, none of the government bodies whether municipal body or the Public Works Department is trying to solve the issue.

Other major reasons behind the pollution are **dust and emission** from industrial activities, **vehicular emission**, **lack of last-mile connectivity** of public transport, and **lack of governance** to monitor the existing mechanism.

How can the problem be addressed?

a) there is a need for fundamental **shift in agricultural patterns** along with providing **compensation to farmers** to tackle the issue of stubble burning, b) **unauthorized industries** are the large emitter so those industries should be monitored, c) ensuring the last mile connectivity of the **public transport** so that people use it as alternative to private vehicles, d) **proper governance** system is needed with a **single entity** that takes responsibility for air quality management,

9 PM Compilation for the Month of December 2022

14. [The GM mustard debate](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**The GM mustard debate**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: concerns associated with GM crops

News: The government had cleared the environmental release of a genetically modified (GM) variety of mustard, **DMH-11**, recently which has been opposed by the activists and the matter has reached the court.

Why is the government trying to release GM mustard?

There has been a significant **rise in the import bills** of the edible oils which has led to a shoot up in the price of edible oils causing a **food security issue** in India.

Therefore, the government is trying to reduce the dependence on other countries and save its forex reserves.

It has said that approving the GM mustard variety would not lead to opening of the gates for all other transgenic crops.

For example, there has been no progress in the case of **Bt brinjal** which has passed all the safety tests and regulatory processes.

However, environmental activists and NGOs have opposed the efforts of the government.

They question biosafety data and claim that it will harm human and soil health, cause environmental damage, and threaten the existence of other species, like honeybees.

What are the arguments that favours GM crops?

Oppositions to GM crops rely on the **precautionary principle**.

This principle argues that new innovations may have severe impacts on human or environmental health in the absence of scientific consensus and adequate information.

However, simply relying on this principle does not hold true for GM crops.

GM crops have been under cultivation for almost three decades in different parts of the world. There is little evidence to justify the dangers that are being highlighted.

Countries such as the United States and Canada, Brazil, South Africa, and India’s neighbours like Pakistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh are already growing GM crops.

Even in India, Bt cotton has been in cultivation for two decades and there has not been any such concerns with it.

Moreover, **a certain portion of imported edible oils as well as some other crops are genetically modified varieties** which have already been consumed by Indians without any harm.

Further, as per the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (**NAAS**), arguments made against GM mustard are totally **unscientific and fallacious**.

15. [Scenarios for the future of India, and the world](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Scenarios for the future of India, and the world**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and development

Relevance– Scenario of economic growth and development

News– The article explains the possible scenarios for growth and development of the Indian economy. It also explains the choice of developmental model that should be promoted by India at global level.

Making predictions of the economic growth of nations is a lucrative industry employing many economists, researchers, analysts, and commentators.

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What are the scenarios of India's future predicted by the WEF and CII report called 'India and the World: Scenarios to 2025'?

It projected three scenarios of India's future-

First scenario– It looked deeper within India's current reality at that time. It revealed forces which would dampen growth in the future if not responded to in good time. The opening of India's economy had created more opportunities for private enterprises. There was rapid increases in the wealth of the top 1%. Millionaires were multiplying.

While **entrepreneurial spirits** were unleashed, signs of their increasing frustration were also visible. Violence was increasing. It was not restricted to rural, and Naxal areas. Urban crimes were also increasing.

Second scenario– It showed **increasing inequality and insecurity**. It could compel the government to impose controls on politics for security and also play a larger role in the economy without adequate resources. A heavy-handed government would weaken India's democracy and stall its economy.

Third scenario– It was more attractive. Here, the changes that people need are produced by them. They are led by local leaders based on local production and consumption. Such enterprises use local resources and local energies.

They are more **sustainable than top-down, large-scale programmes**. If India's policymakers pursued this model of change, economic growth would be more **inclusive**, more **environmentally sustainable**, and faster too.

What is the situation around the world today?

There are tensions within wealth driven economic growth the world has pursued in the last 30 years. **Increasing inequality and insecurity** around the world have resulted in reactionary forces in many countries, including China and Russia amongst the BRICs. They have appeared in India too.

Inequalities have further increased. **Top-down solutions** to the global environmental crisis are producing only more hot air. Violence between powerful countries deploying the latest technologies is harming millions of innocent people around the world.

Which model India should promote at G-20?

It must promote the choice that revolves around **local systems solutions** for environmental and economic problems, cooperatively implemented by communities. This model solves global systemic problems. It also creates a more **harmonious world**.

It must also adopt the **"Gandhian" approach** to promote this choice.

16. [Fixing gas prices](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"Fixing gas prices"** published in the **Business Standard** on **6th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure- Energy

Relevance– Petroleum and gas sector

News– The article explains the issue of gas pricing in India.

What are the commendations of Kirit Parekh for gas pricing?

It has suggested a cap of \$6.5 per million British thermal unit(btu) as a ceiling and a floor of \$4 per million btu on gas supplies from ONGC and Oil India older fields. It also applies to **administered price mechanism gas**.

What is the current mechanism for gas price in India?

Gas prices are adjusted every six months in India in line with **international pricing benchmarks**.

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It is pegged to oil or substitute fuels. India current gas pricing formulae are pegged to international benchmarks like **US Henry Hub and Russian and Canadian domestic gas** rates. It brings them close to markets.

What is the rationale behind the recommendations of this committee?

Domestic gas prices will be linked to 10% of the cost of crude oil imported into India.

The reason for altering the peg is that gas now costs more than oil. In such a situation, industries and households move to alternatives like naphtha and fuel oil.

It does not matter much in **mature markets**. But, in the case of India, it has invested large sums in gas transmission pipelines, LNG import terminals and city gas networks. This can become a cause of concern.

India allocates scarce APM gas to fertilizer plants and city gas facilities. It depends on **imported LNG** for over half its needs. This ratio will increase in the near future due to government policies.

What is the way forward for gas pricing?

Oil and gas exploration is an **expensive and high-risk business**. Investors expect **pricing freedom and policy certainty** to protect their investments.

Therefore, it is important to provide **pricing freedom and policy certainty** at all times.

If the government wants to prevent **supernormal profits** during periods of high prices, a **transparent windfall tax** could be an option.

17. [The Great Jobs Hunt – Too few Indians are seeking work and mostly among those working quality of employment isn't great](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“The Great Jobs Hunt – Too few Indians are seeking work and mostly among those working quality of employment isn't great”** published in **The Times of India** on **7th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Employment.

Relevance: About the quality of employment.

News: India's faster GDP growth does not translate into good quality jobs. Further, India does not also have timely and reliable job data.

About India's unemployment rate

The government's quarterly urban **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** and Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy's **Consumer Pyramids Household Survey** peg India's unemployment rate at 7.2% and 8% as of September and November 2022 respectively.

This means that around 3.5-3.9 crore Indians of the working age population, who are willing and able to search for jobs, are not getting jobs.

These are two large-scale datasets. But these surveys do not mention, **a) Unemployed persons who are not looking for jobs, b) About the quality of jobs and their productivity**. For instance, disguised unemployment is completely neglected in these surveys.

Read more: [India's big problem of low-quality employment](#)

What is the ground reality of India's quality of employment?

Low labour force participation rate (LFPR): The LFPR in India is currently around 46%. So, for every 100 Indians of working age, a staggering 54 are not participating in the labour force. On the other hand, in 2021, the LFPR for Brazil was 58% and for all the OECD countries the ratio was 60%.

Low female labour force participation: India's female LFPR is just 19%. This is even lower than in Saudi Arabia.

Youth unemployment: It has increased steadily. For instance, the ratio stood at 22% in 2019 and was 28% in 2021 as compared to 18% in 2010.

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Increase in farm employment: The PLFS indicates 46.5% of the labour force works in the agriculture sector today as compared to 42.5% in 2019. Agricultural employment increased by 3.4 crores while industry and services employment only grew by 93 lakh.

Overall, India might be the only developing country that is pushing people back to agriculture.

Decrease in salaried employment: Regular salaried employees have dropped from 24% in 2018-19 to 21% in 2020-21.

More subsidy per job: The government plans to create around 8 lakh jobs over the next five years through the Production Linked Incentives schemes. Overall, the estimated cost of government subsidies will be Rs 2 lakh crore, amounting to Rs 25 lakh per job created. This is an enormous subsidy per job.

The youth's response to the army's Agnipath Scheme reinforces the failure of India's job creation programmes.

Read more: [The employment-income crisis](#)

What should be done to improve the quality of employment?

Government, private sector, and civil society must come together to find a sustainable way to create more and better jobs.

18. [Talk about coal – India must consider energy transition partnerships](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Talk about coal – India must consider energy transition partnerships**” published in **Business Standard** on **8th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure

Relevance: Just Energy Transition Partnerships and India

News: The Indian government has refused to accept JETPs and phase out its coal dependence due to the concerned stakeholders involved and the need of coal-based energy for the growth of the nation.

What is Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs)?

It is a major option for large developing economies that want to shift from coal dependence.

A JETP for the South African coal sector was announced last year at the CoP-26 with an \$8.5-billion initial commitment from foreign governments and donors to pay for the costs of its coal phase-down.

Indonesia has also announced setting up a JETP for its own coal sector that will mobilise global financing of \$20 billion.

What is the stand of the Indian government?

The **Indian government is not ready to accept JETP** for its coal sector. Instead, the focus of the government is on funding renewable energy.

This is because **renewable energy** is a mature sector in the country and it is easy to get private finance from the global market. The constraints with renewable energies in India are regulatory and technological not financial.

What can be the course of action?

It is not clear why India is stepping away from JETP because it would provide India with the required finance to bail-out the coal dependent power sector.

Therefore, the government should come up with a mechanism that estimates the costs and benefits of a JETP and come up with a clear financing proposal that will ensure an equitable transition away from coal power in India.

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19. [Greening of the GST – The environmental dimension of taxes must rank high in any rate rationalisation exercise](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Greening of the GST – The environmental dimension of taxes must rank high in any rate rationalisation exercise**” published in the **Business Standard** on **8th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: About greening the GST.

News: As the Goods and Services Tax (GST) has stabilised after the pandemic, it is time for rate rationalisation. This will help in both revenue buoyancy and a simpler rate regime. Further, India can also think of greening the GST.

What are the various reforms proposed for reforming GST?

A committee on Dual Control, Threshold and Exemptions was created by the earlier empowered committee of state finance ministers. This committee recommended **a)** India should move towards a three-tier rate structure. Such as **1) Merit rate** at 8%, **2) Standard rate** at 16%, and **3) Demerit rate** at 30%, **b)** The GST exemptions need to be broadly phased out. Such as including aviation turbine fuel and natural gas in the GST net. India should create a limited list of items under exemptions.

Read more: [Taking stock of five years of GST](#)

What are the other changes required for greening the GST?

Reform the coal sector: **1)** The government should limit the use of cess on coal for GST compensation to states. Instead, the government has to use the amount in pursuing cleaner coal technologies, **2)** India’s increasing coal demand should be met by deep coal mining instead of open-cast mining. This is because coal from deeper layers emits less carbon dioxide per unit.

Utilise plastic waste: **1)** Incentivise plastic scrap usage in road constructions and establish alternative usage for recycled plastic waste, **2)** Create tax incentives, especially GST incentives, for promoting plastic waste recycling, **3)** Setting up a technology mission to promote plastic recycling and finding alternative usage for recycled plastics.

All these will make the policy ban on plastics more effective.

Promoting renewables: **1)** Bringing down the GST rates on a range of components, consumables and spares used by the renewable sector, **2)** An expert committee can be set up with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and representations from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy to jointly provide a green rating for all the equipment that helps in the promotion of the renewable sector.

How do these changes help in evolving GST?

The above changes will ensure that **a)** The merit rate also has an environmental dimension. Thereby influencing the allocation of resources, and **b)** Fixing the rate for individual items becomes more transparent and based on broad principles.

Read more: [Has GST reduced inter-state disparities?](#)

India needs to remember that Greening the GST is only a small step in India’s fight against climate change.

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20. [A green tax would help augment government revenue](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A green tax would help augment government revenue**” published in the **Livemint** on **8th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: About levying a green tax.

News: The government has been looking at different ways of augmenting its revenues in its fight against climate change. Levying a green tax is one such move.

Why does India need to levy a green tax?

1) India’s top 4,000 odd companies had a combined turnover of roughly ₹100 trillion in 2021-22. On average, if the green tax rate is, 0.5% of turnover, the government can rake in an amount of ₹50,000 crores annually.

2) As the government is already planning to issue green bonds for projects that are environmentally compliant, a green tax would complement this effort.

3) Make businesses pay for the damage caused to the environment.

4) Some companies have been observed to indulge in ‘greenwashing’ just to meet CSR obligations. A separate tax would defeat greenwashing.

Must read: [Green Bonds: Benefits and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What India has to do before levying a green tax?

Every economic activity adds its bit to pollution and can be brought under the tax net. The Centre needs to **commission research agencies** to independently evaluate the emissions of all industries and **set standards** for the same.

No need to be uniform: The green tax need not be uniformly applied, and its rate could vary from 0.1% to 2%, depending on the industry concerned. As the sales of these companies or industries grow, they would automatically yield higher revenues to the government.

Focus on industrial groups: Ideally, India’s green tax should be levied on a company based on emissions that can be measured. As it is difficult to assess, India can slot companies into industry groups and levy taxes on them.

Focus on consumer: Consumers of products and services that are environmentally unfriendly should be made accountable and should pay for the same. For instance, levying green tax on older vehicles.

Read more: [Green tax on vehicles older than 15 years](#)

21. [Net zero transition for \\$7 trillion](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**Net zero transition for \$7 trillion**” published in the **Business Standard** on **9th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issues related to climate change and global warming

News- The article explains the efforts put by various sectors to achieve the goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

What is contained in the BloombergNEF report?

BloombergNEF modelled a path to global **net zero by 2050**. It found that annual investments need to jump to \$7 trillion to limit warming to 1.77 degrees Celsius above the **pre-Industrial Revolution** levels.

Electric vehicles and low-carbon power present the biggest investment opportunities, followed by **power grids**. Money is also needed to flow to **carbon capture and storage**, advanced nuclear technologies and hydrogen.

Demand for lithium in 2050 is predicted to be around 17.5 times the total demand in 2020.

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What is the case of solar manufacturing?

India's decarbonisation journey depends on solar power. **Local panel manufacturing** received another boost with the government's recent approval for the second tranche of subsidies worth Rs 1,950 crore. BNEF sees the possibility of an oversupply of modules if all planned production facilities come online.

The US is on its own journey of **incentivising local manufacturing of solar panels**. Other countries such as Brazil are also in the same league.

The case for supporting a **local supply chain** of panels is stronger in countries that have high annual installations. Seven countries are in the 5,000 megawatts or above bracket this year. Another 10 are added if the cut-off is 2,000 MW.

What is the case of electric vehicles?

Electric vehicles are accelerating towards an era of super-charged growth. The world's two largest car markets will be in the lead. These are China and the US.

Every fourth car sold in the US will be electric in the next three years. China and several European countries are already seeing EVs account for around 25% of new car sales.

As many as 66 national and regional governments are committed to selling only EVs and completely phasing out **conventional internal combustion engine** vehicles. Another set of countries has committed to accelerate the transition to 100 per cent clean cars by signing the **Zero Emission Vehicles Declaration**, including India and Kenya.

Two- and three-wheelers lead the vehicle **electrification wave** in India. In the first nine months of this year, 44 electric two-wheelers were launched with an average range of 117 kms. **Start-ups** continue to be the main players in this segment.

Passenger EV launches in 2022 have centred on premium segments. This is expected to continue in the near term until automakers can offer an affordable small electric car in the **super-competitive market**.

What is the case of electric aviation?

The **electric aviation industry** is still at an early stage. There has been a recent surge in orders from aircraft operators for **small battery-electric or hybrid-electric machines**. According to BNEF, close to 1,000 electric aircraft have been ordered from various manufacturers.

Developers aim to make their aircraft **commercially available** by 2030. However, the commercial launch of such aircraft needs to overcome **technical hurdles** and complete the lengthy and costly process of type certification.

Leading developers include Heart Aerospace and Aviation. No electric aircraft are currently commercially available except for Pipistrel's Velis Electro.

22. [Let's reflect on what'll make India a developed country](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "Let's reflect on what'll make India a developed country" published in **Live Mint** on **9th December 2022**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Economic Development**

Relevance: **characteristics of a developed nation**

News: The External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during his recent United Nations General Assembly speech has told the world about India's ambition to become a developed country by 2047.

How is a country considered developed?

There is no exact definition of a developed country. The World Trade Organization (**WTO**) has no technical classification for a country's stage of economic development.

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Countries are generally considered developed based on the size of their GDP, per capita income of their citizens along with the presence of high-quality infrastructure.

However, members of the Development Assistance Committee (**DAC**) grouping of OECD is generally considered to be among the world's most developed countries.

Therefore, India to be called a developed country can refer to the parameters adopted by the countries of DAC.

What are the characteristics of the countries of DAC?

First, most of these countries are home to the world's **largest multinational corporations**. These MNCs earn a huge amount of money contributing to the GDP of the nation.

Second, these countries are **net exporters** of high technology, high value goods and services. This helps most of them run a current account surplus and invest in research, improving their factor productivity and profits.

Third, these countries have large **multinational banks**. These big banks provide cheap credit access to the people and business which in turn helps in the growth of the countries.

Fourth, currencies of these countries have global value. This helps the central bank of those countries to influence the capital flows across the globe through various monetary policies.

Fifth, these countries have **active citizen groups** that help organize their economies. The citizens of these countries understand their responsibilities in nation-building and take up the responsibility actively.

Sixth, these countries have successfully **eradicated absolute poverty** and provide some form of minimum living standard to their citizens like basic health care, unemployment benefits, etc.

What is the way ahead for India?

India is on the path of achieving the characteristics of a developed nation in the coming 25 years. However, this can only be possible if proper strategies are adopted along with the collective efforts of its citizens.

23. Defence industry perks up: India's decades-old ambition and its paradoxes

Source: The post is based on the article "**Defence industry perks up: India's decades-old ambition and its paradoxes**" published in the **Business Standard** on **10th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance: Issues related to defence manufacturing

News: The article explains the scope of defence production in India. It also explains the challenges faced by the defence production sector.

What is the current situation of defence manufacturing in India?

India is the **second-largest importer** of defence hardware.

India has the third or fourth-largest budget for **defence research and development**. The money spent is a lot less than by either the US or China. It is bigger than the defence R&D budgets of the UK, Germany, and France, all of which make frontline defence weaponry in a way that India does not.

In fact, for leading public sector defence companies in **aerospace and electronics**, R&D has accounted for a bigger share of total expenditure than the international average.

Defence production has been more or less static in dollar terms. This is also the case with **defence exports**.

What are some steps taken by the government for boosting defence manufacturing?

The government is **opening up** the defence sector to private manufacturing. The finance minister in her last Budget speech said that a quarter of **defence R&D spending** funded by the government would be done by private industry and in non-government institutions.

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The **C-295 transport aircraft** will be made by a Tata-Airbus joint venture. **Howitzers** are being made by Larsen & Toubro and Bharat Forge.

On the **R&D front** too, the government has set up a **Defence Innovation Organisation**. Its executive arm has funded well over a hundred R&D projects in the field of **drones, robotics, artificial intelligence, and advanced materials**.

In addition, some **start-ups** produce dual-use products for image recognition, wearable technology, and the like.

What are the issues faced in defence production?

The **defence procurement system** remains a stumbling block for many. The armed forces take too long to accept products based on domestic R&D.

The standard practice of going for the cheapest bidder does little to encourage vendors who have developed technology with government funding.

What is the scope for defence production in India?

Production-linked incentive scheme has just been announced for the manufacture of drones and drone components might make a difference.

Private participation in defence exports: Tesla is said to have shown interest in locally developed materials technology for the **faster charging of batteries**. Two companies have won export orders for the **Pinaka rocket firing system**. Malaysia signed a memorandum of understanding with Hindustan Aeronautics for the **Tejas fighter** this year.

The government no longer claims ownership of the **intellectual property** created with government-funded research. Companies are therefore better positioned to raise capital for moving to the production stage. **Defence Research and production** could emerge as a genuine export story for India.

24. [Delhi, Mumbai ... Poor air quality is a problem that's countrywide. Solutions cannot be state specific](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Delhi, Mumbai ... Poor air quality is a problem that's countrywide. Solutions cannot be state specific**" published in **The Times of India** on **12th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: concerns associated with air pollution and measures required to be adopted.

News: Air pollution in India is often seen as a challenge confined to the Indo-Gangetic Plain (IGP) airshed. However, this is not always true. Coastal cities such as Mumbai and Chennai have also recorded air quality index readings worse than Delhi.

What are the key findings of the various reports?

The **World Air Quality Report** this year showed that out of 50 global cities with toxic air, 35 are located in India.

The **Global Burden of Disease Study** in 2019 estimated that 18% of deaths in 2019 in India were due to air pollution.

Moreover, within India, it's the **poorer states** across IGP which experienced the largest increase in pollution. This means that **vulnerable sections** of the population are more prone to health hazards caused due to pollution.

Further, low air quality also decelerates **economic growth**. **World Bank's** cross-country data for 25 years (1990-2015) shows that China and Vietnam recorded a higher average GDP per capita growth with a smaller change in mean annual PM 2. 5.

What are the concerns with the current policies?

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The major pollutant amongst all air pollutants is PM 2.5. It is the most damaging and arises from many sources such as dust. Therefore, tackling air pollution in India can no longer be seen as a localised solution.

India's current policy approach to improve air quality has been city-centric. It won't work because the source of the problem is an airshed which represents a common geographic area of pollutants.

What is the way ahead?

India needs to change its focus to **geographical airshed**. It will help in changing the nature of incentives offered by public policy.

Therefore, looking at the impact of pollution on **health and on the economy**, the government should come up with a solution that provides a robust solution.

[25. Price distortions in fertilisers will not help farming in the long run. Govt can offer acreage-based cash transfers](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Price distortions in fertilisers will not help farming in the long run. Govt can offer acreage-based cash transfers**" published in the **Indian Express** on **12th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices.

Relevance: About India's fertilizer consumption.

News: Both the Soil Health Card scheme and mandatory neem-coating of urea are aimed to promote the balanced use of fertilisers. However, the annual consumption of this nitrogenous fertiliser has only risen from 30 to 35 million tonnes (mt) in the last five years.

What India's recent fertilizer consumption denotes?

Increased Urea and DAP: The sale of urea went up by 3.7% during April-October over the period 2021. The consumption of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) also increased to 16.9% over the same time.

Decrease in other fertilizers: Sales of all other fertilisers — including complexes containing nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), K (potash) and sulphur (S) in different proportions – have reduced over the same time.

Farmers not balancing the use of fertilizers: This denotes that Indian farmers are effectively applying just urea and DAP — both high-analysis fertilisers containing 46% N and P respectively.

Must read: [The current costs of fertilizers in India are unsustainably high to bear for a mineral resource-poor country](#)

Why there is little incentive for farmers to buy other fertilizers?

The government has fixed the maximum retail price (MRP) of urea and DAP is around Rs.6000 and Rs.27000 respectively. But the government informally fixed MRPs at Rs 29,000-31,000 and Rs 34,000 per tonne for NPKS complexes and muriate of potash (MOP) respectively.

All this makes **a)** Increased use of DAP as it has 46% P as well as 18% N, and **b)** The current NPK ratio is about 13:5:1, as against the ideal 4:2:1.

Read more: [PM inaugurated One Nation One Fertilizer Scheme](#)

What should be done to ensure balanced fertilizer consumption?

1) The government should **replace subsidies on individual fertiliser products** with a flat per-hectare cash transfer, maybe twice a year, **2)** **Create every farmer an e-wallet account** into which the cash transfer can be credited before the kharif and rabi planting seasons. Further, the

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e-wallet may be used only for the purchase of fertilisers, and **3)** The government can **maintain a stock of basic fertilisers**, including urea and DAP, to keep the price rise in check even in a decontrol scenario.

26. [Funding reality check for India's dream to achieve net-zero by 2070](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Funding reality check for India's dream to achieve net-zero by 2070**" published in the **Business Standard** on **12th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

Relevance: About decarbonising the Indian economy.

News: India lacks the capital to meet its net-zero carbon emissions target by 2070. Decarbonising the Indian economy by 2050 may cost as much as \$12.1 trillion.

About Norway's ambitious plan to decarbonising the economy
Norway announced the world's biggest carbon capture and storage (CCS) scheme to make Oslo the carbon sink for Europe's industrial emitters. The transport and storage part of the project will connect continental European CO2 emitters to offshore storage sites on the Norwegian Shelf.

The first phase of the plan is expected by 2024. Phase 1 aims to collect 1.5 million tonnes (MT) of CO2 from industrial emitters, and permanently store the carbon at 2,600 metres under the seabed. Phase 2 aims to quadruple phase 1's capacity.

Note: ONGC also sought a similar CCS project in India under the seabed off the coast of Gujarat.

Read more: [Net zero transition for \\$7 trillion](#)

What are the challenges in decarbonising the Indian economy?

a) Lack of **cost-competitive technology alternatives** in India, **b)** The government is **silent on financially supporting** any decarbonisation efforts, except an Rs.100 billion subsidy scheme for EVs, **c)** India is home to some of the world's most polluting cities led by Delhi. Despite that, the **outlay for the environment ministry** is only Rs70 billion, **d)** India's **renewable energy companies** have raised only around \$6.8 billion in debt from offshore capital markets since January 2021. This is **less than 2%** of India's annual decarbonising costs, **e)** Last year, the green bond issuance in India was a mere \$750 million, **f)** In 2021 India's renewable sector attracted only \$12-\$15 billion in investment. Further, funding costs are the largest expense for renewable projects and **g)** Indian banks are reluctant to provide funds for decarbonisation. For instance, India's biggest bank, SBI, rarely funds commercial and industrial renewable projects.

Overall, traditional domestic and foreign sources and debt capital markets will not be able to fund the massive investments needed for decarbonising and they have limited access to foreign capital on concessional terms.

Read more: [India's Strategy for Net Zero – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to decarbonise the Indian economy?

-India should **facilitate access to low-cost, long-term and diversified capital** to facilitate decarbonising the Indian industry.

-Accelerating **investments from sovereign wealth funds** which typically have a low cost of funding and represent a more patient investor is critical. For example, Singapore, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Canada have created such funds.

-India can **shift tax revenues from fossil fuel sales to emissions** and **implement a carbon pricing policy** that increases the direct taxes on emissions from nil to Rs6,000 a tonne by 2050.

-India can mobilise capital for decarbonisation projects by **making them as priority sector lending**.

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-Renewable projects are an easier way for corporates to reach net zero. Hence, **emission reduction projects should be funded by banks.**

27. [COP27: A mirage in the desert](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**COP27: A mirage in the desert**” published in **Business Standard** on **12th December, 2022**

Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 3- Climate Change

Context: COP27 that concluded recently in the Egyptian coastal city of Sharm el-Sheikh. It has not made any gains which were expected of this summit. The article talks about the failures of COP-27.

How the COP-27 can be tagged as an under-performer?

First, loss and damage fund has been one of the decisions. The plan says that it will establish institutional arrangements for addressing loss and damage. It will catalyse technical assistance to developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

However, the only decision in this regard has been that by 2023, it will select the host country for the secretariat. **There has been no decision on who will pay for funds, which countries are particularly vulnerable that will receive the funds.**

Even though natural disasters reach catastrophic levels and deeply damage people and economies, there is no clear framework to stop it.

Second, the summit was agreeing on differentiating between the white and black fossil fuels. But at the last moment, it changed it to the term “low-emission energy” in the clean energy mix. It was done to provide acceptance to energy sources like natural gas, which emit half the carbon dioxide of coal. It is against the goal of deep decarbonisation.

How rule-based system of climate governance can solve the problem?

Rule-based governance was going against big polluters. So, this idea was dropped in the 2015 Paris Agreement. Now, there is no agreed way to differentiate between the polluters, and this gives a country like China a free pass.

However, a **rule-based system of climate governance** is the need of the hour. It is a simple proposition, that should be well established in law, that the country responsible for the pollution must pay. IN this scenario, it will be well-understood that a country like India would also contribute to the fund, if it has crossed, certain agreed threshold of greenhouse gas emissions.

28. [Why the central government should stop funding the power distribution sector](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why the central government should stop funding the power distribution sector**” published in the **Indian Express** on **13th November 2022.**

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Energy.

Relevance: About aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses.

News: The Power Finance Corporation has reported that the aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses of discoms have gone up from 20.7% in 2019-20 to 22.3% in 2020-21.

What are aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses?

The AT&C estimate gives an idea of the losses a distribution company (discom) faces in its line of business. If a discom has received 100 units of power, the AT&C figure will tell how many units are not recovered in terms of revenue. For example, a figure of 25% would mean that for every 100 units of power fed into the discom, 25 units are not recovered.

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Generally, commercial losses largely imply theft, faulty meters, meters being manipulated or bypassed, etc. Some technical losses are inevitable in a distribution system, but these can vary a lot across discoms (roughly between 4 to 12%) depending on the technology.

Must read: [DISCOM sector in India: Challenges & solutions – Explained, pointwise](#)

About India's AT&C losses and schemes to reduce them

The Indian distribution system has always faced high AT&C losses in excess of 30% in the early 2000s. The AT&C figure was 26.6% in 2011-12. It has come down to 22.3% in 2020-21 (Only a little less than half a per cent a year). It ranges from 4.5% (Daman and Diu) to 60% (Nagaland power department).

The major states where the AT&C figures are higher than the national average include Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh.

Due to this **a)** Discoms became financially weak and made it economically unviable, and **b)** To meet the revenue gap, discoms borrow money from banks leading to a very high-interest burden.

So, the government introduced

Accelerated power distribution scheme (APDP): Under this, the government, has been trying to lower AT&C losses by **providing grants/cheap loans** to discoms to improve their distribution infrastructure and also for the installation of smart meters.

Many versions of the scheme have been attempted. For instance, in 2022, a budgetary outlay of about Rs 3 trillion was earmarked for aiding the distribution sector.

Read more: [Power tariff revisions and the state of DISCOMs](#)

Why are AT&C losses not coming down?

1) **Work culture** issue in public discoms, 2) **Lack of consumer indexing:** All end consumers get their supply from some identified distribution transformer (DT). Each DT is under the supervision of one person who is held accountable for losses (meaning theft) from his DT. In most public discoms, no one knows which consumer is attached to which DT (implying a lack of indexing).

What should be done to reduce AT&C losses?

If the AT&C losses come down to 15% (the target in several government policy documents) from 23%, additional revenue of about Rs 50,000 crore may be generated. For this,

India needs proper indexing: For example, the Delhi discoms have reduced AT&C losses from 50% (in 2002) to somewhere between 7 to 8% today.

Strict stand from the Centre: The central government provided the money, but the states fail to reduce AT&C losses so far. Hence, the centre should **stop funding the distribution sector** and leave it to the states to clear the issue.

This will force the state governments to **enhance retail tariffs** along with reducing losses.

29. [We will need to find our own sources of climate finance](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“We will need to find our own sources of climate finance”** published in the **Livemint** on **13th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

Relevance: About climate finance.

News: The agreement to create a loss and damage fund might largely trickle in through concessional loans instead of proper funding.

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What is the present state of climate finance?

According to the **OECD's climate finance trends report 2022**, of the targeted \$100 billion aggregate climate funding, about \$83 billion was mobilized from developed nations via global agencies through 2020. Among these, concessional and non-concessional loans stood at 71%, grants at 26% and equity at 2%.

Of these, private climate finance and export credit extended via agencies comprised just \$15 billion.

Thematic split of \$83 billion: a) Majority of the funds are invested in climate **mitigation activities** (\$49 billion) focused mainly on cleaner energy and transport, **b)** After that about \$28 billion was spent in **climate adaptation**, mainly for agriculture, water supply, forestry restoration, coastal fishing and sanitation.

Regions: Asia (42% of the 2020 total), Africa (26%) and Latin America (17%).

Must read: [Climate Finance: Meaning, Need and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why does the world need to work on climate finance?

The adaption finance needs of developing countries will gallop to \$340 billion annually by 2030. For instance, India alone will have to install around \$250 billion worth of renewables by 2030.

Small and medium-sized enterprises and local communities are left out of major government plans such as India's long-term Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS).

Must read: [Climate Reparation: Loss and Damage – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to improve climate finance in India?

Focus on sustainability: For that, India's credit curve requires a different approach that **rewards entities seeking to build resilience** through sustainability.

Improve banking access: Indian banks should be nudged to **lock in long-tenure, low-cost private climate capital** from alternative sources, like overseas investor institutions, private philanthropy, CSR budgets, etc. They should be incentivized to **lend cheaper loans to diverse businesses**.

Encourage new climate technologies: This can be done by nurturing finance instruments and venture capitalists.

Bridge urban-rural divide in climate finance: This can be done by providing low coupon sustainability-linked bank loans or overdraft facilities at the entity level.

Delineated projects of larger companies or well-rated special-purpose vehicles should meet **pre-set mitigation specifications** and has to be encouraged to raise funds through domestic financial institutions (DFIs), project financiers and private and sovereign green bonds.

Read more: [Funding reality check for India's dream to achieve net-zero by 2070](#)

30. [Fixing India's airports: It needs more world-class terminals](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Fixing India's airports: It needs more world-class terminals**" published in the **Business Standard** on **13th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Infrastructure.

Relevance: About the present condition of Indian airports.

News: Recent visit of the Union Civil Aviation Minister to Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) has resulted in few minor changes to processes at the airport. A large proportion of the plan consists of asking airlines to cancel or move flights. But this is not a sustainable solution.

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What are the challenges faced by Indian Airports?

-Despite various attempts to increase airport capacity, the ability of India's terminals to absorb passenger growth is lacking.

-**Poor processes, customer-unfriendly approach, and additional red tape** have reduced effective airport capacity in recent years.

-There is **not enough manpower** and **checkpoints are poorly manned**. So, additional checkpoints are being introduced. This resulted in long queues for passengers. For instance, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has not assigned enough manpower.

-**Under-provision of infrastructure**: For example, the newly built airport for north Goa at Mopa is supposed to be able to handle only 4.4 million passengers a year. This is less than the number of passengers passing through another airport at Dabolim currently.

-**Low terminal count**: Soon, Delhi and Mumbai will both be among the 10 busiest airports in the world. Their global peers have half a dozen terminals to aid passenger movements. On the other hand, Delhi has only one world-class terminal, Terminal 3, and that is now more than 10 years old.

What should be done to improve the smooth functioning of Indian Airports?

Improve manpower: This has to be done from immigration officials to the CISF to the airport authority to operators to ground-handling companies to airlines

Improve capacity: Like their global peers, all metropolitan cities in India should have at least two airports with at least six to seven terminals among them.

Further, India should create a long-term plan for airport sustainability.

31. [Big Tech and the need in India for ex-ante regulation](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Big Tech and the need in India for ex-ante regulation**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Issue related to market distortions

News– The article explains the issue of market dominance by big tech companies in the digital space in context of the **Competition (Amendment) Bill**.

The Competition Commission of India recently imposed a penalty of 1,337.76 crore rupees on Google for abusing its dominant position in the android mobile device ecosystem.

What is the Competition Commission of India?

It was set up under the Indian Competition Act 2002. The objective was to protect and promote competition in markets, and prevent practices that hinder competition.

What are market dominance practices by big tech companies that need to be delta by regulators?

In any free economy, **market dominance** is natural. But it becomes problematic when it is abused to prevent competition. The intent of Google's business was to make users on its platforms abide by its **revenue-earning service**. The **network effects**, along with a **status quo bias**, created significant **entry barriers** for competitors to enter or operate in the markets concerned. Competition laws are too slow to respond in complex technical sectors.

Predatory pricing is another issue. It is the lowering of prices that forces other firms to be out competed. Amazon and Flipkart were accused of **deep discounting**. It is essential to establish an ex-ante framework to ensure a level playing field for local sellers.

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There are concerns related to **bundling of services** especially with pre-installed apps. The manufacturers eliminate competition without the consumer's consent. Apple is facing heat in the U.S. and Europe over pre-installed apps. So, Indian competition laws need to be vigilant.

The regulation has not dealt effectively with the evolving **data economy**. There is **sensitive data** stored on these platforms. Big corporations have asserted ownership of the right to use or transfer this data without restriction. The storage and collection of women's and children's data need to be dealt with more cautiously to build a **safe digital place**.

Finally, market distortion can also lead to poorer quality of services, data monopoly, and stifle innovation.

What is the way forward for the new bill?

There is a need to establish **harmony** of the Competition law with the new Consumer Protection Act 2020 and e-commerce rules. The new law should include a mechanism to ensure **fair compensation** for consumers who face the brunt of the **anti-competitive practices** of the Big Techs.

India is now on the cusp of a **digital transformation**. The **Competition Act of 2000**, was largely constituted to deal with the physical marketplace. There is an urgent need to contextualize the law to the digital marketplace and devise new provisions with adequate **ex-ante legislation**.

It is equally important to contextualize **India's reality**. Kirana stores competing with e-retailers such as Big Basket is an example of unfair competition between legacy businesses and their digital counterparts.

In such a setting, pushing for an **EU-based approach** to competition might not be the best way for Indian marketplace interests in protecting the local digital economy.

India needs a new **ex-ante-based framework** that promotes competition by ensuring a **level-playing field** for the big, the small, the old and the new.

[32. Ready for the worst – Governments and agencies have shown better preparedness for cyclones](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Ready for the worst – Governments and agencies have shown better preparedness for cyclones**" published in **The Hindu** on **13th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster Management

Relevance: measures needed to reduce the impact of cyclones

News: Cyclone Mandous did not cause much damage to the people of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh even though it led to heavy rainfall.

What were the reasons behind less damage by the cyclone?

It was the response of the government official that controlled and guided the disaster management that lessened the impact of the cyclone.

The Tamil Nadu government has been paying greater attention in improving the **storm-water drain network** and such other works. This was one of the reasons that many areas were not flooded.

The State government's coordination with the Meteorological Department and its preparedness in tackling the **post-landfall situation** made a difference to the situation this time.

Technology also played a key role in forecasting and in the circulation of the information.

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What is the way ahead?

There is a need for the State government and the Meteorological department to **coordinate** and work together by leveraging **technology, resources** and improving the **functioning** to lessen the impact of cyclones in the future.

33. [What AIIMS Server “Hijack” tells Us About Cyber Security](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**What AIIMS Server “Hijack” Tells Us About Cyber Security**” published in **The Times of India** on **14th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Security

Relevance: concerns with the ransomware attacks

News: There was a ransomware attack on the servers of AIIMS recently. This attack has raised concerns over the safety of citizen’s personal data stored online in Aadhaar database.

What is a ransomware attack?

Read here: [Are ransomware attacks increasing in India?](#)

What are the concerns?

Ransomware attacks have been increasing these days. The efforts of moving India into **Digital India** raise concerns after looking at the current cyber-attack on the AIIMS and that also without a comprehensive cyber security plan.

Further, the **Aadhaar database** which contains the information of citizens online is also vulnerable to cyber-attacks.

GoI and the state governments proceeded to adopt Aadhaar-based technology despite the **Supreme Court** ruling against making Aadhaar registration mandatory.

Today, Aadhaar is used at various places and it has been made mandatory for availing various services. This increases the risk of getting exposed to any such cyber-attacks in the future even though the government argues that it is safe.

What is the way ahead?

There is a need for establishing a **Cyber Security Board** with the government and private sector as participants.

This board should have the authority to recommend and strategize the plan for keeping the government’s data safe online and prevent any future cyber-attacks.

34. [A conservation Bill that endangers forest rights](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A conservation Bill that endangers forest rights**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment conservation

Relevance– Issues related to wildlife protection

News– The article explains the criminalisation laws used for conservation of the ecosystem by government agencies. It also explains the impact of criminalisation on forest rights.

What is the WPA and amendment proposed in this act?

The **Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972** has safeguarded numerous species of wild animals and plants by prohibiting all forms of hunting.

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It has created inviolate areas where **wildlife conservation** may be carried out. The amendment further invests in this conception of protected areas and species by bringing in newer species to be protected.

What has been the impact of criminal laws to assist wildlife conservation through WPA?

It has led to creation of **Protected Areas** where conservation can be undertaken without the interference of local forest-dwelling communities. State and Forest Department control over forests would not have been possible without criminal law.

Pitting wildlife species against communities as human-animal conflict has eluded the true cost of criminalization under the WPA.

The recent move to increase penalties by four times for general violations should raise questions about the nature of policing that the WPA engenders.

A study by the **Criminal Justice and Police Accountability Project** in MP found that persons from oppressed caste communities such as Scheduled Tribes and other forest-dwelling communities form the majority of accused persons in wildlife-related crimes.

The Forest Department was found to use the **threat of criminalisation** to force cooperation. It used this for devising a system of using community members as informants and drawing on their loyalty by employing them on a daily wage basis. Over 95% of the cases filed by the Forest Department are still pending.

Criminal cases filed by the department are rarely **compounded** since they are meant to create a **'deterrent effect'** by instilling fear in communities. Fear is a crucial way in which the department **mediates governance** in protected areas.

How are forest rights impacted by WPA? Forest rights as part of the Forest Rights Act were put in place to correct the injustice meted out by **forest governance laws** in recognising forest-dependent livelihoods.

The FRA has been made subservient to the WPA, thereby impeding its **implementation**.

Field work was carried out in **Kanha National Park**. It was noticed that individual forest rights in **buffer zones** of the Kanha National Park of Madhya Pradesh were recognised. The same cannot be said of collective rights. Fishing, which forms an important part of subsistence for tribal communities, has come to be regularly criminalised as part of the WPA.

Unchecked discretionary policing allowed by the WPA and other forest legislations have stunted the **emancipatory potential** of the FRA.

35. The rise of rural manufacturing

Source– The post is based on the article **“The rise of rural manufacturing”** published in **The Hindu** on **14th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth

Relevance– Issues related to manufacturing sector

News– The article explains the issue of manufacturing shift to rural areas.

Is manufacturing shifting to rural areas?

The movement of manufacturing away from urban locations was brought out by the **Work Bank** in a report a decade ago. It found that manufacturing plants in the formal sector are moving away from urban areas and into rural locations, while the informal sector is moving from rural to urban locations”.

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Recent data from the **Annual Survey of Industries for 2019-20**, shows that the rural segment is a significant contributor to the manufacturing sector's output. 42% of factories and 62% of fixed capital exists in the rural side. In terms of employment, it accounted for 44%.

Why is manufacturing shifting to rural areas?

Rural areas have generally been more attractive to manufacturing firms because **wages, property, and land costs** are all lower than in most metropolitan areas.

There exist floor **space supply constraints** in urban areas. However, the driving force behind such a shift is the continuing displacement of labour by machinery as a result of the capital investments in new production technologies. In cities, factories just cannot be expanded as opposed to rural areas.

There exist **production cost differentials**. Many firms experience substantially higher operating costs in cities than in rural areas. It has inevitable consequences for the firm's profitability and competitiveness.

Another reason is the possibility of **capital restructuring**. Big firms deliberately shift production from cities to take advantage of the availability of less skilled, less unionised and less costly rural labour.

What are the challenges faced by rural manufacturing?

The **cost of capital** seems to be higher for firms operating on the rural side. This is evident from the shares in rent and interest paid. The rural segment accounted for only 35% of the total rent paid, while it had 60% of the total interest payments.

There exists an issue of "**skills shortage**" in rural areas as manufacturing now needs higher skilled workers to compete in the highly **technological global 'new economy'**. Manufacturers who depend only on low-wage workers simply cannot sustain their **competitive edge** for longer periods as this cost advantage vanishes over time.

36. [Our experiment with an e-rupee will yield demand-side learnings](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Our experiment with an e-rupee will yield demand-side learnings**" published in the **Livemint** on **14th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Money market.

Relevance: About India's digital rupee.

News: Central banks across the world have begun experimenting with various forms of digital money. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also launched two variants of a digital rupee on an experimental basis. One for wholesale transactions between banks and another for retail transactions within the private sector.

About India's digital rupee

Read here: [RBI unveils features of digital rupee, plans to launch pilot soon](#)

How India's digital rupee is unique?

India decided to launch two different variants such as the wholesale variant and the retail variant.

Wholesale variant: It operates through the accounts that commercial banks have with the Indian central bank.

Retail variant: It is based on a two-tier system—individuals and firms can hold it only through the banking system.

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Some unique features include **a) India's digital rupee is based on the idea of tokens, b) RBI will issue the digital rupee but banks will distribute it to the private sector** like fiat currency.

Why does India have two different variants?

Does not try to alter the current monetary system: At present only banks have accounts with RBI while the rest of the economy operates through the commercial banking system. India followed the same approach with the digital rupee also.

Digital rupee does not pay any interest to its holder: Digital rupee is a substitute for cash rather than a substitute for bank deposits.

The **challenges** with interest-paying CBDC held directly with the RBI are **1) It will create challenges for bank deposits. Thus, it will create financial stability risks, 2) It will complicate the conduct of monetary policy** as individuals move money between their accounts with commercial banks and the central bank, leading to fluctuations in the monetary base.

Must read: [Digital Rupee: Advantages and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)













What is the demand for the Indian rupee at present?

Shifts in how the world pays

Changes in payment shares over time show that India has seen cash persist while instruments like cheques and demand drafts have sharply declined.

All payment shares % point change 2005-2020

mint

Country	Cash	Last 3-years	Cards	UPI	Cheques/ Demand drafts
 India	15	-4	7	36	-58
 Russia	-38	-8	53	14	-30
 China	2	-3	22	40	-65
 Indonesia	30	-8	-7	48	-11
 Mexico	19	2	19	10	-48
 Malaysia	7	-2	6	31	-44
 Thailand	-3	-2	1	26	-24
 Australia	0	-1	9	11	-19
 Singapore	5	-1	5	24	-34
 UK	-3	-1	8	47	-52
 Norway	-11	-2	6	8	-3
 Sweden	-20	-1	5	15	-2

Source: IMF

Source: Livemint

A recent research paper by economists at the International Monetary Fund shows that **a) The use of cash as a mode of payment has actually grown in India between 2005 and 2020, b) The use of instant payment options such as NEFT and IMPS has increased, c) The use of cheques and demand drafts has dropped sharply.**

Overall, the government wants to reduce the use of cash in the economy.

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Will the digital rupee reduce the demand for cash in the economy?

CBDC is focused on money as a medium of exchange rather than a store of value. Hence, it has to compete with the UPI ecosystem which is already ubiquitous in most parts of the country to reduce the demand for cash in the economy.

[37. Skewing the mustard field: The Yellow Revolution's revival needed](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“Skewing the mustard field: The Yellow Revolution's revival needed” published in the **Business Standard** on **14th November 2022**.

“A welcome shift” published in the **Business Standard** on **14th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country.

Relevance: About the benefits and concerns associated with DMH-11.

News: Recently, the Ministry of Environment has allowed the commercial cultivation of genetically modified (GM) mustard.

About GM Mustard

Must read: [Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee approves commercial cultivation of genetically modified mustard yet again](#)

The DMH-11, developed by Delhi University's biotechnology centre, reportedly gives about a 28% higher yield than the popular mustard variety Varuna.

What are the other gene-altered food crops allowed for field-testing by GEAC?

Read here: [Gene-altered food crops: Enhancing mustard yields](#)

What are the major benefits of GM Mustard?

Reduce oil imports: India is the fifth-largest producer and also the seventh-largest importer of edible oils in the world. GM Mustard will help in reducing these imports. Globally also, the rapeseed-mustard yields have gone up with the introduction of GM hybrids.

Spun technology-driven green revolution: The perceived positive government approach to GM crops can increase the introduction of genetically superior variants of food and commercial crops and might usher the technology-driven green revolution.

Read more: [GM crops – on approval to GM Mustard](#)

What are the concerns associated with the approval of GM Mustard?

Low yield: ICAR-All India Crop Research Project's 2006-07 field trial data for GM mustard has shown that GM mustard had a much lower yield that year across locations.

Health implications not studied properly: The Supreme Court's Technical Expert Committee highlighted the negative health implications and risks of Bt cotton and Bt brinjal on cows and rats, respectively.

Despite such impacts, **multi-generational trials** and many such tests were **not done** at all for GM mustard.

No need for Genetic Modification: Mustard does not exhibit high hybrid intensity for seed yields like maize, pearl millet, sorghum, sunflower and castor. Further, there is a natural, efficient, proven and safer way exist to prepare male sterile lines using cytoplasmic male sterility (CMS). This questions the need for Genetic modification for creating DMH-11.

Increase herbicide usage: Seed production of DMH 11 rests on the usage of a highly problematic herbicide glufosinate. This herbicide has not been approved for use in mustard crops. Further, the DMH-11 was never tested as a herbicide-tolerant crop.

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Against organic and natural farming: Ministry of Agriculture is promoting organic and natural farming to reduce agrochemical usage. The Ministry has also recently issued directions to curb the usage of glyphosate.

On the contrary, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is incentivising glufosinate, which is even more problematic than glyphosate.

Read more: [GM Crops in India: Issues and challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

How to increase India's mustard yields?

The yield potential of Indian mustard has been realised up to 4 tonne/ha at experimental fields. But many farmers are harvesting 3 tonne/ha to 3.5 tonne/ha in states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. This can be bridged by

Harness genetic gains in oilseed mustard: This can be realised by promoting high-quality seeds with good oil content from high-yielding released varieties/ non-GM hybrids and ensuring functional seed systems and input services.

For example, farmers in Rajasthan are growing Giriraj mustard. It was produced through natural hybridisation, which is giving 3-3.5 tonne/ha yield and also has high oil content (up to 42%).

Promote effective agronomic practices: a) India should **horizontally expand of the area of mustard cultivation** by using rice fallow, inter-cropping or diversifying crops, b) **Utilise technological options** like the right placement of seedlings through efficient fertiliser-cum-seed drill, proper plant geometry, conservation agriculture, mustard transplanting, etc.

Revive the Yellow Revolution: The “Yellow Revolution” to protect India from subsidised edible oil was unfortunately discontinued in the 1990s. It is time for India to revive that.

38. [Why are India's slowing exports a cause for concern?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why are India's slowing exports a cause for concern?**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: India's economic growth

News: India's exports declined about 16.7% in October this year. Imports increased and the trade deficit widened by 50% while Vietnam and Philippines saw an increase in the export.

What are the reasons behind the decline in exports?

Sectors such as engineering goods, steel and allied sectors saw a decline in exports.

The reasons are – a) high inflation in the developed region, b) falling demand in the China, US and the EU, c) Russia-Ukraine war, d) export duty levied on steel and allied products to help increase local availability and check the prices, e) leave taken by workers on festivals that impacted the output.

However, despite these reasons, the Indian economy is expected to grow.

What are the positive factors for the Indian economy to grow?

According to the Finance Ministry, **domestic demands** are enough to increase the growth of the economy. It also expects that a **re-invigorated investment cycle** will lead to growth and job creation.

The Ministry further said that inflation was due to **local factors** such as higher food prices rather than imports-based reasons.

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Therefore, it expects that inflation will become lower with the easing international commodity prices and the arrival of the Kharif crop.

As per the Ministry, **consumer inflation** has lowered in the month of November and the same month saw the lowest enrollment in MGNREGS.

Further, **private sector capital expenditure** will touch six lakh crore this fiscal which would make it the highest of the past six years. **Private capex** depends on credit or loans from the banking system and this has improved in the past months.

Although **forex reserves** have seen decline in recent months, the situation is better than 2013 when foreign investors began pulling out of India's financial markets.

Therefore, these reasons prove that even though the exports have seen a decline but Indian economy is on the right track of growth.

39. [Energy conundrum – Solar power is important for India, but it will not serve every energy need](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Energy conundrum – Solar power is important for India, but it will not serve every energy need**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: concerns associated with setting up solar powers

News: India has committed to source nearly half its energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 and source at least 60% of its renewable energy from solar power. However, there are problems associated with generating solar based energy.

What were the plans of the government regarding solar powers and what are problems associated with it?

The government decided to set up large solar parks as small parks lead to higher per-unit production costs.

The government announced the ‘**Solar Parks and Ultra-Mega Solar Power Projects**’ policy for the creation of large parks in 2014 with an initial plan to set up 25 parks capable of generating at least 20,000 MW by 2019.

The government later increased it to 61 parks with a target of 40,000 MW in 2017.

However, **only a fourth** of the capacity has been achieved by now which means projects worth 10,000 MW have been commissioned. Four projects have also been cancelled by the Centre due to slow progress.

Further, India had committed to generate 1,00,000 MW from solar power by the end of 2022. However, only around 61,000 MW of such capacity has actually been installed.

There are various reasons behind the slow progress such as challenges in **acquiring land**, setting up necessary **infrastructure**, and **environmental issues**.

What is the way ahead?

These all show that India is lagging behind its commitment and it seems that Solar power may not be enough to cater the demand of the growing India.

Therefore, along with expanding the economy the government should also consider whether renewable power, solar, wind or nuclear will be enough for sustainable economic growth or not.

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40. [Building climate resilience collectively](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Building climate resilience collectively**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance– Fighting climate change

News– The article explains the issue of climate resilience for our cities.

What is needed for improving the climate resilience of cities?

To facilitate implementation of the climate action plan and enable their integration with other missions, a **data-driven approach** may be useful.

There is a need to demonstrate urban planning strategies aimed at **climate resilience** through specific actions and interventions and link them to various finance streams accessible to the urban local bodies. It should be backed by sound data.

Cities need **effective and efficient planning instruments** that translate master plans into **transformative business-ready investment projects**.

What is the Urban Sustainability Assessment Framework?

It is a decision support tool of **UN-Habitat** for municipal commissioners and urban practitioners. It supports the **sustainable and resilient urban planning and management** of Indian cities.

It enables cities to regularly capture **inter-sectoral data** and corresponding analysis on urban metrics. In this way, it helps in monitoring the performance of a city in static and dynamic contexts.

Cities can enhance **vertical integration** by pulling together the missions’ objectives at the central level, State policies and projects, and local implementation.

What shows the effectiveness of nature based solutions?

Bhopal case– In the case of Bhopal, transportation makes up for 19% of the city’s GHG emissions. Bhopal favours non-motorised transport . But, it provides access to public bike docking stops to only 24% of its population. Only half of its streets have footpaths.

The city has immense potential to reduce its carbon footprint designing shared streets for personal vehicles, public transport, NMT and pedestrians. They can be linked with future economic activity zones and underserved areas.

These streets can also be used for native plant species and groundwater recharge by integrating water-sensitive urban design features with a potential of reducing GHG emissions.

Jaipur case–Jaipur has only 1.42 sq.m per capita of open space against a benchmark of 12 sq.m per person. Residential areas were found to be at least 1.25°C cooler than neighbourhoods with less green pockets. In industrial pockets, the urban heat island impact was greater with temperatures higher by 1.1°C.

Simple yet effective solutions that can increase Jaipur’s resilience include community recharge pits in neighbourhood parks, and increasing permeable spaces along mobility corridors.

What are the components of nature based solutions for climate change adaptation?

The planning approach for building climate resilience needs **comprehensive stakeholder participation** towards building climate resilience.

Active involvement from various tiers of government, non-governmental, community-based organisations, and academic institutions is desirable at each step.

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Movements on the city performance indicators communicate the impact of these interventions to the decision-makers and the community at large.

Cumulative benefits and efficient use of public resources from various central and State missions, and **on-ground convergence** are parts of this approach.

This **evidence-based approach** aims at making cities sustainable, resilient and inclusive with no one and no place left behind.

41. [Understanding the fusion energy breakthrough announced by the U.S.](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“Understanding **the fusion energy breakthrough announced by the U.S.**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th November 2022**.

“**Energy breakthrough**” published in the **Business Standard** on **15th November 2022**.

“**A civilizational pivot? Don’t hold your breath**” published in the **Livemint** on **15th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Science and Technology developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Relevance: About nuclear fusion.

News: Recently, United States government officials announced that at the National Ignition Facility (NIF) had achieved a significant milestone in nuclear fusion research. It produced 153% as much energy as went into triggering it.

About the nuclear fusion research

Must read: [US scientists take quantum leap on the road to create nuclear fusion energy for generating power](#)

Ways to achieve nuclear fusion: There are three ways to trigger nuclear fusion.

1) Setting off a fission explosion: The explosion momentarily creates conditions that trigger a fusion explosion. For instance, the hydrogen bomb. This process is not used to create commercial power.

2) Inertial confinement: It puts fusion material in a chamber made of a material that absorbs energy. The chamber is bombarded with high-energy lasers and it absorbs energy until destroyed in a fusion reaction. For example, the NIF.

3) Magnetic confinement: It involves trapping hydrogen plasma (electrically charged gas) within a magnetic field to safely apply heat and pressure. It is considered to be more technologically mature than inertial confinement. For example, International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).

Condition for chain fusion reaction: For a fusion chain reaction, the energy released by the initial reaction needs to set the stage for more reactions.

Significance of fusion energy: Nuclear fusion fuel is usually isotopes of hydrogen such as deuterium which is abundantly available, or relatively easily produced.

What are the challenges associated with the recent achievement?

-The NIF fusion facility is a **highly sophisticated system with tiny moving parts**. Even small changes in input conditions can lead to large variations in output. So, replicating the same in other places is challenging.

-For fusion to be truly gainful, the energy released by the reactions needs to be greater than the energy going into the lasers and not just the energy delivered to the hohlraum. This hasn't yet been achieved.

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Note: At the NIF lasers fire at a hohlraum not at the capsule directly.

-The road to a power plant from the NIF's current achievement isn't well-understood.

What are the challenges associated with nuclear fusion?

-As stars mature, other elements are also produced via fusion. But simulating stellar conditions on Earth is hard.

-Complex, expensive machinery using massive power is needed to safely create conditions of intense pressure and temperatures of above 35 million degrees Celsius.

-Creating the above two situations and controlling fusion to produce stable power is even more difficult.

What is the significance of the recent achievement in nuclear fusion?

a) The research infused a hope that nuclear fusion could be commercially viable, although it is still at least 15 to 20 years in the future, **b)** It should lead to more investments, including private sector investments, in fusion research and development, especially at ITER.

American achievement has been described as a 'civilizational pivot' by some scientists. However, Indian scientists must clean up India's energy mix cheaply and safely by expanding wind, solar and other sources.

42. [The cost of India's subsidy spike](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**The cost of India's subsidy spike**" published in the **Indian Express** on **15th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies.

Relevance: About the government's subsidy bill.

News: The government has received the Lok Sabha's approval to spend an additional Rs 2.14 lakh crore towards subsidies on the 3Fs — food, fertiliser and fuel — in the current fiscal.

The recent increase will take the total expenditure in 2022-23 to Rs. 5.32 lakh crore. This would be the second-highest outgo on major subsidies after the Rs 7 lakh crore in 2020-21.

Why does the government's subsidy bill increase recently?

External factors: The last three years have been extraordinary in terms of external shocks. Such as the pandemic (2020-21 and 2021-22), climate calamities (2021-22) and the Russia-Ukraine war (2022-23) and each seamlessly transitioning to the other. This led to increase in the government's subsidy bill.

Internal factors: **a)** India saw millions die during the 1943 Bengal Famine or the great drought of 1899-1900. So, the government wants to ensure poor and vulnerable got access to free/near-free grain without any hurdles, **b)** The government by increasing subsidies has ensured no significant shortage of urea and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) for Indian farmers, despite the disruptions to the global fertiliser trade following the war.

Read more: [Accounting for subsidies: Let's build on the 'revdi' debate](#)

What are the challenges in the higher government's subsidy bill?

a) The market distortions created by increasing subsidies might be incurred excessively even in normal years, **b)** Unlike fossil fuels which are net taxed than subsidised, fertilizer and foods are not, **c)** The retail price of urea and DAP has been raised just once. This forced fertiliser companies to heavily under-price them, and **d)** The issue prices of wheat and rice through the regular public distribution system were frozen at Rs 2-3/kg since July 2013.

Read more: [The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies \(Agreement\) at the WTO Ministerial meeting](#)

High subsidy bills entail costs, create market distortion. Hence, the government needs to revise these policies and introduce direct benefit transfers to reduce the government's subsidy bill.

43. [New data protection bill: A step closer to protecting privacy rights](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**New data protection bill: A step closer to protecting privacy rights**” published in **The Indian Express** on **16th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT

Relevance– Issues related to digital space

News– The article explains the provisions of the **Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022**.

What are some provisions of the Bill?

Bill has two major stakeholders — the **Data Principal and Data Fiduciary**. Data Principal refers to the subject whose data is being processed. Data Fiduciary is an entity that processes this data.

In different spheres of the law, when one party owes a “**fiduciary**” **duty** towards another; the relationship between the two is guided by **trust, assurance and good faith**. The Bill seems to be affirming that the Data Fiduciary is responsible for safeguarding the interests of **Data Principals**.

Bill describes the **obligations** of the Data Fiduciaries towards Data Principals, the **rights and duties** of the latter. It provides for a **regulatory framework** through which data will be processed.

Which aspects of the Bill are noteworthy?

Safeguarding the data– The Bill has outlined a category of Significant **Data Fiduciaries** that are required to comply with **additional measures** to safeguard the personal data of individuals. This in addition to the **general obligations** to prevent the misuse of the personal data of individuals.

This distinction is essential as only companies that process vast amounts of data or have a potential impact on the country's sovereignty and integrity need to take such stringent measures.

Data localisation– Onerous provisions on “**data localisation**” in the previous versions of the Bill have been omitted. The reworked Bill permits the government to notify countries to which data transfers may be permitted. A **balance** has now been struck between the **legitimate concerns** of businesses and the **protection of personal data** of individuals.

What are the provisions of the Bill that require further elaboration?

Section 25 and Schedule I, that deal with **penalties**, require elaboration. Section 25 refers to the quantum of financial penalty that must be imposed on a person guilty of non-compliance in matters related to detail. The focus remains only on the **nature and gravity** of the violation.

The Bill must ensure that the penalties imposed are **proportionate** to the size and operations of a company. Fines must not drive companies into economic loss. The **European Union's General Data Protection Regulation** levies penalties in accordance with the total turnover of companies.

What are the positive aspects of the Bill?

The Bill safeguards **individual data**. It also promotes **cooperation** between data fiduciaries and the government.

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It draws upon the best practices of foreign jurisdictions, such as Europe and Australia. It has also been drafted in a manner that is **tailor-made** to India's requirements.

Even the exemptions granted to the Centre are extremely **restrictive** and in sync with past **judicial precedents and Article 19(2)** of the Constitution.

44. [We're a step closer to an overhaul of our competition law](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“We're a step closer to an overhaul of our competition law”** published in the **mint** on **16th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Regulation of economy

News– The article explains the issues related to Competition(Amendment) Bill,2022. It also explains the standing committee report of this bill.

What are key provisions of this bill?

Deal value threshold for CCI Filing– One of the key proposals of the bill is introduction of a deal-value based threshold. Currently, a deal triggers CCI filing requirements when certain thresholds based on parties turnover are met.

The bill proposes a mandatory CCI filing requirement for all deals valued above 2000 crore rupees. Such a deal should have **substantial business operations** in India. This requirement for business presence is called the **local nexus requirement**.

However, there is no clarity on how the deal value would be calculated and what quantum of local nexus would trigger a filing.

Settlement of cartel cases– The Bill has excluded the cartels from the **settlement mechanism**. It is most pernicious violation of the competition law and settlement procedure for them would send a wrong signal.

What are recommendations of the Standing Committee on Finance on this bill?

Local nexus requirement should apply to target and not to acquirer. Calculation of deal value and nature of local nexus has been left to CCI.

It proposed to expand the scope of settlement mechanisms to cartels also. Admission of guilt may not be mandatory for settlement. It allowed the provision of compensation for consumers affected by cartels

Allowing a dominant company to impose **reasonable conditions** necessary to protect IPR.

Using the **rule-of reason approach** to assess the abuse of dominant position.

Limiting the scope of **hub and scope cartels** to exclude those who do not intend to actively participate in furtherance of a cartel, such as online platforms acting only as **intermediaries**.

Not raiding or recording the statement under oath made by external legal counsels or independent advocates, which would compromise the principle of **attorney-client privilege**.

45. [Lessons in budgeting: Changing Budget tack amid changing realities](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Lessons in budgeting: Changing Budget tack amid changing realities”** published in the **Business Standard** on **17th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance– Issues related to government budgeting

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News– The article explains the trends of the budget approach by the current finance minister. It also explains the current economic scenario.

What has been the trend of the budget approach by the current finance minister?

There is a change in her approach to budgeting. It had a **somewhat adventurous** beginning in 2019. Now it is notable for **growing realism**.

In 2019, **tax revenue** fell short by a sharp 18.4%, because of economic slowdown and unprecedented cut in corporate tax rates. This year reported a **fiscal deficit** of 4.6%. It was up significantly from the originally budgeted 3.4%.

The next year GDP shrank due to the full impact of Covid. **Corporation tax revenue** shrank by 17.8%, while collections from **GST** dropped by 8.3%. The finance minister decided to end the wholesale fudging of **fiscal-deficit numbers** that had been going on. Bringing **off-balance sheet borrowing** into the government's books doubled the deficit to a record 9.2%.

In her third Budget, Ms Sitharaman signalled that she had realised the folly of budgeting over-reach. She projected only **modest revenue numbers** for 2021-22. Actual collections overshot the original projections by 13.4%. The year ended with a **deficit** that was more or less the same as originally projected.

This year is headed for a repeat of that performance. **Tax revenue** is running well ahead of projections. But on the expenditure side the subsidy outlay increased once again because of the impacts of the **Ukraine war** and continuous free supply of foodgrains.

What is the current assessment of economic condition and scope for budgeting?

The **corporation tax rates** now match international benchmarks. **Income tax rates** are at an optimal level. But the multiplicity of **capital gains tax** rates remains. This is the same for GST.

Fiscal deficit remains far too high. Bringing it down is a big challenge. Government needs to provide bigger Budgets for defence, education and health care.

India's Budgets are too small for the demands being made on its governments. So there is really no escape from cutting the **subsidies**. That should lower the deficit to below 6% of GDP.

The additional outlays needed would therefore need to be financed by **fresh revenue**, possibly by raising the average GST level simultaneously with a convergence of rates.

[46. Funding the energy transition: India's G20 presidency must follow lessons from COP27](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Funding the energy transition: India's G20 presidency must follow lessons from COP27**” published in **The Indian Express** on **17th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance– Issues related to climate change

News– The article explains the issue for funding needed to tackle climate change. It also explains the scope of private capital for climate financing

What is the difference of approach among countries on climate actions?

There remains a rift between developing and developed countries. It is on account of **asymmetries** between the **contribution and the financial responsibility** assumed for climate change.

It is estimated that 92% of excess **historical emissions** are attributable to developed countries. Yet the economic impact of climate change is disproportionately borne by vulnerable developing

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countries. The 58 vulnerable countries account for 5% of **global emissions** while the costs incurred are significant.

What are the issues related to climate financing?

UNEP estimates that efforts on **climate adaptation** would require \$160-340 billion by 2030. But, current financial flows are inadequate. Developing countries are receiving only a third of what is required.

COP27 underscored the need to **accelerate finance**. In its draft decision, the UN highlighted that it will require a **transformation of the financial systems, structures and processes**. The recognition is not novel and is self-evident from estimated gaps in finance. The 2009 commitment of \$100 billion in transfers remains unmet.

There exist funding mechanisms like **Green Climate Fund** meant to support **adaptation and mitigation**. But, there is wide discontent with the pace and extent of access to such facilities. The **institutional architecture** of multilateral funds has been demonstrably slow to deliver. There is the visible reluctance to contribute among the big economies.

What is the scope of private capital to finance climate actions? As the **public finances** are not adequate to fight climate change, private capital will be needed. But for private capital flows, a **proper regulatory response** is needed by the countries.

Even as private capital shifts to the green sectors on account of regulatory action, its **accessibility** for countries will depend on financial expectations.

We are watching climate actions connected with **tax policy**. This is evident from the revival of the **Financial Transaction Tax in the EU**. A general overhaul of **tax architecture** is inevitable.

What should be the course of action on climate change for India as it assumes the G20 presidency?

Then there have been repeated questions as to why India chooses to use the term “**phase down**” and its slow response. The question of phasing down coal will be asked repeatedly. The learnings from **COP27** must inform the G-20 presidency.

It is also important to remain conscious that dramatic shifts in policy are pursued domestically and not all change is pursued by **consensus**.

There needs to be better guidance on the pathway to **net zero**.

The principle of **common but differentiated responsibility** should not be traded for the promise of finance.

47. [How to ensure that the internet remains accessible to all](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**How to ensure that the internet remains accessible to all**” published in **The Indian Express** on **17th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT

Relevance– **Issue** related to accessibility of internet

News– The article explains the need to ensure a level playing field in the context of evolving technologies in digital space.

Why is there a need for regulating the emerging digital space?

To enable **access** to the internet, various **gateways** have come up in the last few decades in the form of telecom service providers, personal computers and smartphones, operating systems.

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However, when these gateways **enable and restrict access** to other gateways or networks, the openness of the internet is threatened. They then shift roles from being a **facilitator to a regulator**, from being a **gateway to a gatekeeper**. Hence, the need for a **code of conduct or regulation** arises to keep the **playing field level and accessible** to all.

In case of India, example of the enforcement of this code on providers Indian government policy on **Net Neutrality**. It ensured that we took a democratic stance against Big Tech. Without this policy, we would have seen the internet being partitioned into walled gardens controlled by telcos and Big Tech companies.

What are the issues related to accessibility of emerging digital space?

Digital technologies are evolving at a very fast rate. The code of conduct and regulations can't catch up with the new gateway providers that are emerging.

The two prominent operating systems, **Google and Apple**, enjoy a lion's share of the app store market. They brought in good practices to ensure **basic hygiene** for smartphone applications, maintained **quality benchmarks**, and safeguarded the interests of their users.

Various practices of these distribution platforms have come into question lately. These range from restrictions on payment gateways, **advertising choices, app policies** and various other aspects of an application or business that could be considered discriminatory in both principle and practice.

In March, a report placed before the **Competition Commission of India** found Google Play Store's payments policy "**unfair and discriminatory**". **Google Play Store and Apple's App Store**, are said to be charging up to 30% commission on payments processed.

Google and Apple have garnered **unilateral control** over the publishing of smartphone applications on their OS. Various smartphone application-dependent businesses and developers continue to remain vulnerable to such **internal business policy changes** on these platforms.

What are the steps by various governments for regulating digital space?

The European Union has recently enacted the **Digital Markets Act**. Its regulations aim to keep digital markets **innovative and open to competition**, through **ex-ante regulation**. It will prohibit the implementation of the most harmful **anti-competitive practices** by the largest digital platforms.

The Indian government has taken steps to maintain its **sovereignty** through the path-breaking and disruptive **digital public goods** it has created. Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, and CoWIN are just a few examples.

What is the way forward?

The need of the hour for the government to devise appropriate **regulations** to ensure a level playing field and not let the innovating **gateways turn into gatekeepers**.

48. [Countering terror: All nations must come together against groups targeting civilians](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Countering terror: All nations must come together against groups targeting civilians**" published in **The Hindu** on **17th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

Relevance: About countering terror threats around the world.

News: Recently, India convened the UNSC special briefing on the 'Global Counterterrorism Approach'.

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What are the key highlights of India's address on countering terror?

According to India's External Affairs Minister, **four hurdles to better counterterrorism cooperation need immediate attention**. These are **1)** state support for financing terror; **2)** multilateral mechanisms that are opaque and agenda-driven; **c)** double standards and politicisation of countering terrorism according to where terror groups belong, and **4)** the "next frontier" (the use of emerging technologies such as drones and virtual currency by terrorists).

India also mentioned that a P-5 country (**China**) continues to **block the designations of Pakistan-based terrorists** from the LeT and the JeM.

India stressed the global countries to unite and accept India's 1996 proposal, the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terror**. This will institute global practices on countering terror. But the P-5 countries are polarised over Russia's war in Ukraine.

Note: India also conducted a **No Money For Terror conference**, and an **Interpol conference** on countering terror. Pakistan condemned India as India described Pakistan as an "epicentre of terrorism".

What was Pakistan's response to India's argument on countering terror?

The Government should focus on the task at hand, that is **"re-invigorating" the global agenda and counter-terrorism architecture** by emphasising the need for unity on the issue.

India should **garner attention from all countries** to provide resources to the battle against terrorists, who continue to threaten civilian populations worldwide.

49. [Medical manna: Public health must offer incentives to recruit doctors](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Medical manna: Public health must offer incentives to recruit doctors"** published in **The Times of India** on **17th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Relevance: About increasing doctor count.

News: There is an increase in undergraduate medical seats from 53,000 in 2014 to 96,000 in 2022 and postgraduate seats from 31,000 seats to 63,000.

About the status of increasing doctor count

Between 2011 and 2021, government medical seats have increased faster, from 18,000 to 48,000 seats, while private seats went from 22,000 to 44,000.

India has 9 active doctors per 10,000 population. India trail China (22), US (26) and UK (30) in this regard. But at our current pace of adding nearly 1 lakh doctors a year, these deficits will be wiped out in 10-20 years.

Graduates from government colleges have bonds mandating rural service for 1-2 years. The increasing doctor count might address India's problem of too few doctors in rural areas and backward states in future.

What are the concerns associated with increasing doctor count?

All southern states have over 10 UG seats per 10,000 population because they invested early in medical education. Similar numbers in UP and Bengal are 4, Bihar and Jharkhand 2.

As quantity is increasing, ensuring quality medical education will be tougher. So, India should address this interstate variation before it creates further challenges.

What does India need to do with an increased doctor count?

a) With thousands of new doctors, the **public health system must grow massively to absorb them** into its ranks, **b)** Government should **provide jobs at attractive salaries** that can address

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the issue of doctors preferring cities, and **c)** India should **promote migration of medical graduates from south to north.**

50. [Why the Draft Data Bill needs stronger provisions for localisation of non-personal data](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Why the Draft Data Bill needs stronger provisions for localisation of non-personal data”** published in **The Indian Express** on **19th December 2022.**

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT

Relevance– Issues related to data in emerging digital space

News– The article explains the issues related to the fresh draft of the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022.

What are the positive aspects of the draft bill?

It is crisp, to the point and easy to read. It is the first attempt to define who can possess data and what their **legal obligations** are.

It doesn't get into issues such as **critical and non-crucial data.** There is a very simple definition of **personal and non-personal data.**

The new draft is neither a copy nor an adaptation of Anglo-Saxon laws, like the **EU's General Data Protection Regulations** or the **CLOUD Act.** It is designed for India's requirements.

What are the issues with the bill?

Lack of clarity– There is still no clarity on the role and structure of the data protection board. It is not clear if it will be a regulator or adjudicator or how it will function independently.

Issues related to sovereignty– People concerned about **data sovereignty** have long been advocating the housing of servers within India. The draft appears far too focused on individuals' privacy issues.

There can't be a handful of **global corporations** accumulating data through ethical and unethical means. In many cases, they can manipulate the minds of consumers.

India has resisted the attempt by developed countries at international fora to bring in the **seamless flow of data** to facilitate the competitiveness of their corporations.

The **UNCTAD Trade and Development Report (2018)** says, “it is important for the countries to control their data and be able to use or share their data and **regulate its flow.**”

Issues related to data transfer– **Chapter 4 of the draft Bill** deals with the **transfer of data** outside the country. It says that the Central Government may notify such countries or territories outside India to which a **Data Fiduciary** may transfer personal data, in accordance with such terms and conditions as may be specified. These words may make the job of **trade negotiators** difficult when free trade agreements with the US, EU and the UK are yet to be concluded.

What are the updates that are required for the bill?

The draft requires **fine-tuning**, including determining the **quantum of penalties.** The upper ceiling has been fixed at Rs 500 crore. There are global examples, where the penalties are determined as a percentage of their global revenues.

There is no knowledge of how Big corporations use the data accumulated by them and what products are made out of it. To curb these tendencies, there is an urgent need for **data nationalism and localisation.**

India needs to assert its **sovereign right over non-personal data** emerging out of Indian citizens and make it obligatory to share products with Indian players.

India must continue to stand its ground on **e-commerce** at various WTO ministerials in the context of transfer of data outside our country.

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It would have been much better if the law didn't leave important matters, such as the **obligations of data fiduciaries** once the data moves to foreign shores open to interpretation.

The draft talks about **consent, deemed consent**, and has provisions for **withdrawal of consent**. But, this is largely for **personal data**.

As of now, there is little clarity about how personal data can be converted into **non-personal data**. One just has to remove the **identification labels** to make information non-personal.

51. [Setting standards – New SEBI guidelines](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Setting standards**” published in the **Business Standard** on **19th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Mobilisation of resources

Relevance– Issues related to money and capital markets

News– The article explains the new guidelines by SEBI for performance benchmarking and investment approach for Portfolio Management Services segment.

What are the new guidelines by SEBI for the PMS segment?

Additional protection– The new guidelines would give investors a clearer picture of what strategy a PMS is targeting, and also a clearer idea of returns with detailed comparisons and timeliness.

The **investment approach (IA)** is the documented philosophy adopted by a given portfolio manager. Now this IA needs to provide more information by disclosure of an **additional broad layer of strategy**. This additional layer can be defined as “**hybrid**”, “**equity**”, “**debt**” and “**multi-asset**”.

Each IA can be tied to only one **specific strategy**, though a manager could adopt and declare several IAs. This tagging is based on the judgement of the manager concerned.

Change of strategy– The tagging of an IA to a strategy or a benchmark may be changed only after offering an option to subscribers to the IA, to exit without any exit load. The performance track record prior to the change would not be used by the portfolio manager for performance reporting after the tagging changes.

Any changes in strategy and benchmark would be recorded with the logic justifying the change, and this would be verified as part of the annual audit of the PMS.

Setting of benchmarks and standards– The **Association of Portfolio Managers in India (APMI)** could prescribe a maximum of three **benchmarks** to compare for each strategy. These benchmarks would then reflect the core philosophy of the strategy. Further, the board of the **portfolio managers** would hold responsibility for ensuring the appropriate selection of strategy and the benchmark for each IA.

The APMI must set **standardised valuation norms** for portfolio managers, similar to the corresponding benchmarks applicable to mutual funds. The valuation of **debt and money market securities** by portfolio managers would have to be in line with the valuation norms set by the APMI.

Evaluation of securities– The APMI would empanel valuation agencies for providing **security-level prices** to portfolio managers. The managers would have to mandatorily use services from **empanelled agents** for the valuation of debt and money-market securities in their portfolios.

Obligation of portfolio managers– The managers would also have to present the **time-weighted rate of return (TWRR)** of the IA alongside the return of the selected benchmark, and the returns of other PMS running under the same strategy. Such returns and comparisons must also be disclosed while advertising.

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Further, portfolio managers would have to submit **monthly reports** to the APMI within seven working days of the end of each month. The APMI would then have to make available the monthly reports on its website.

What are the advantages of these new guidelines on PMS?

This would clearly lead to improved **transparency** in the PMS segment. These **multiple layers of additional disclosures** and the detailed **benchmarking of returns** would allow investors to gauge relative performances better.

This information would also allow investors to make more **informed choices** in the selection of a new scheme.

52. [Passport To Justice: Can AI Help Cut Pendency Dramatically?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Passport To Justice: Can AI Help Cut Pendency Dramatically?”** published in **The Times of India** on **19th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: use of AI in solving pendency of cases

News: India has a large pendency of cases and it takes a lot of time to hear them and provide judgment. Therefore, artificial intelligence techniques can be used to provide on time judgment.

How can Artificial Intelligence be helpful in solving cases?

Argentina has created **Prometea software**. It has been developed by the University of Buenos Aires in partnership with the public prosecutor and the constitutional court. It has three primary components –

First, a talkable user-friendly interface with a natural language processor for audio or text inputs so that it can be used by a clerk as well as by a judge. It can also be helpful in creating reports and graphs, providing solutions, sending notifications, doing deep internet search, etc.

Second, expert automation to draft judgments and provide recommendations. It uses **No black box AI** to provide transparent and clear assumptions, thereby preventing its misuse.

Third, **machine learning** for improving accuracy and reducing time in the future and to adapt to new types of cases. This is important to ensure that the software evolves as new judges and case law arise.

What are the advantages of this software?

a) higher success rates, **b)** predict a judgment in 20 seconds with 96% accuracy, **c)** can create multiple versions of the judgment which the judge has to just sign, **d)** operates on the entire range of court process from filing cases, scheduling it and creation of the verdict.

How can this software be helpful for India?

India has currently digitised its passport system unlike before where people used to stand in queues and wait for long hours, today everything is done digitally.

Similarly, this software can also be helpful in digitising the Indian judiciary and help in resolving the problem of pendency of cases. Therefore, there is a need for the Indian judiciary to adopt software like Prometea in its working.

53. [A low-tariff regime can do India a world of good](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“A low-tariff regime can do India a world of good”** published in the **Livemint** on **19th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Relevance: About challenges faced by the Indian economy.

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News: The deputy managing director of the [International Monetary Fund](#) has said that a global need to diversify purchases had generated interest in India in other words “The world is looking at India as a destination for investment.”

What are some major remarks of the IMF deputy manager on the Indian economy?

There is a **global demand weakness** as imminent and **tighter financial conditions** as a potential trouble. The **risks of supply over-reliance on China** gain salience globally.

-Indian exports are showing signs of slowing down and dearer dollar debt has drawn capital out of the country and hit the rupee.

-Smartphone factories are improving in India due to production-linked incentives for manufacturers. Further, private funds have also started coming into other industries. However, their **performance is too small for job generation** and **remains as a challenge in the trajectory of India’s economic growth**.

-**Retrospective taxation, rejections of foreign dispute settlements** and a revenue-sharing clutter in telecom have **created a bad reputation**.

-**Land acquisition has not eased** and India’s **labour market stands with great gender imbalance**.

What should India do to boost its economy at the global level?

As global-scale manufacturing today tends to span multiple borders hence **integration with supply chains** is crucial.

Indian policymakers are keen to establish India as a factory for the world. But it is still a steep ambition, and achieving it will need **well-rounded policy alignment**.

The government has **cut taxes for new ventures** and sought to **slash red-tape and eased tax remission** for exporters. A **lower-tariff regime** will also push local producers to generally get more competitive.

[54. Creators Of Our Destroyers – INS Mormugao, commissioned yesterday, shows both the progress & weakness in indigenous warship building](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Creators Of Our Destroyers – INS Mormugao, commissioned yesterday, shows both the progress & weakness in indigenous warship building**” published in **The Times of India** on **19th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

Relevance: About India’s shipbuilding industry.

News: INS Mormugao, the Indian navy’s latest destroyer of the Project 15B class, has been commissioned recently.

About the Project-15 (P15) family of ships

The Project-15 (P15) class started with INS Delhi. It is India’s first home-built destroyer. It was commissioned in November 1997 and set a new benchmark.

Apart from **three ships** of the P15 class, there have been **three of the P15A** named the **Kolkata class. Visakhapatnam** was the lead ship of the P15B class followed by **Mormugao**.

These ships now complete most of their trials and even weapon firings before commissioning so that they are ready to go in harm’s way sooner.

What are the weaknesses associated with India’s shipbuilding industry?

1) INS Mormugao has taken the **shortest build time of about seven years** due to integrated shipbuilding, while the INS Delhi took over 10 years. But, a drop of build time from 10-plus years to about 6-7 years over a 35-year build period, is by itself not impressive.

2) There are some major commonalities between all three sub-classes of the P15, so efficiencies should have been better.

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What are the improvements in India's shipbuilding industry?

There have been **generational improvements in each sub-class**. Both in terms of combat capabilities, as well as indigenous content. **"Indianisation" percentages have improved in the "float and fight" components** when compared to the P15s.

For example, **a)** The steel for the hull and superstructure is now made in India; **b)** More of the electronic components for electronic warfare, communications and radars are now either Indian-origin or licence-built in larger numbers with knowledge accretion from Indian partner firms in the public and private sectors, **c)** Weapons and their launchers are collaborative like the accurate and lethal Brahmos, **d)** The main and secondary guns as well as anti-submarine ordnance which is now more "Indian" than any time earlier, **e)** There are other design improvements across evolutionary processes that benefit stability, damage control, sea-keeping and stealth through more automation and improved systems needing fewer operators.

WhCreators Of Our Destroyers – INS Mormugao, commissioned yesterday, shows both the progress & weakness in indigenous warship buildingeeds improvement in India's shipbuilding industry?

In the **"move" area or propulsion**, Indian ships reflect big lacunae. For example, frigates and destroyers still **require imported gas turbines**. India does not have any indigenous options even under imported transfer of technology neither in aero nor in marine gas turbines. This has to be improved.

Given the turmoil in Russia and Ukraine, **ships that depend on hardware from these two countries** could face problems that need to be addressed with 'atmanirbharta'.

55. The cost to the country just for savings in CTC

Source– The post is based on the article **"The cost to the country just for savings in CTC"** published in **The Indian Express** on **20th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and employment

Relevance– Issues related to informal economy

News– The article explains the issue of increasing casual and contractual employment in India.

What is the status of the casual workforce in India?

According to the **Periodic Labour Force Survey 2021**, India has about 100 million casual workers and 50 million salaried workers with no written job contract. This gives us an estimate of 150 million contract workers. It is about 30% of the total labour force in the country.

In the **Annual Survey of Industries**, the share of contract employment in total industrial employment increased from 24% in 2004 to 38% in 2017.

After 2001, the public sector also started outsourcing many vacancies, citing them as non-core activities. In the **Public Enterprises Survey 2021**, the share of contract workers in PSUs was 17.1% in 2011-12. It increased to 19% in 2015-16 and 37.2% in 2020-21.

Why is contract employment considered better by the firms?

The cost to the **company (CTC)** is lower for contract employment when compared to permanent employment. This is considered beneficial for the economy as reduced CTC has also attracted foreign investment.

Besides wages, there are **five typical human resource costs: hiring costs, induction costs, career progression costs, severance and superannuation costs**.

Hiring costs are higher for the public sector when compared to the private sector. Millions apply for a few hundred vacancies in the public sector. Conducting examinations on this scale becomes a nightmare for the state machinery. Hiring through manpower suppliers is **cost and time efficient**.

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As contract labour requires **minimal training**, it reduces CTC. Management prefers contract labour as they are not entitled to the **generous paid leave** enjoyed by a permanent employee. Saving comes from no commitment to promotion or **post-retirement benefits** to contractual workers.

The **flexibility of firing** contractual employees is considered to be positively impacting **labour productivity**.

What are the negative impacts of casualisation of the workforce?

A major saving in CTC comes from **wage suppression**. It hurts on account of **reduced consumption and saving**.

Corners cut in hiring and training lead to a **deterioration in service quality**. It results in **second-order losses**, and sometimes accidents. According to a recent study published in *The Lancet*, an annual increase in outsourced spending of 1% in the **National Health Service in England** is associated with a rise in treatable mortality of 0.38%.

Underpaid contractual workers cannot afford **adequate health care** for themselves and their family members. It leads to decline in overall **human capital**.

As nobody invests in the **upskilling** of contractual workers, the **labour productivity** of the economy is also adversely impacted. Contractual workers are not as interested in improving the **quality of the product and services**. It is affecting the export **competitiveness of the economy**.

What are innovative ways used by companies to get around the legal provisions of labour acts?

Some are designating employees as **business partners** in the case of online cab booking and food delivery companies. Others are **segmenting core activity** as tech business in the case of most of the service aggregators.

What is the way forward to overcome the challenges related to casualisation of the workforce?

More research is required to quantify the adverse impact of replacing permanent jobs. The well-being of contract workers and their family members should not be the price the country should pay for savings in CTC.

The argument that permanency of employment breeds **inefficiency** has its own merit and should be dealt with for its root causes.

The public sector should reform its **appraisal mechanism** so as to reward the **efficiency** of permanent workers.

The private sector should realise that outsourcing's cost to the country might be much more than the cost to the company in the long run.

56. The era of free data is over — the law is coming for Big Tech

Source– The post is based on the article “**The era of free data is over — the law is coming for Big Tech**” published in **The Indian Express** on **20th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT

Relevance– Issues related to emerging digital space

News– The article explains the increasing relevance of data across the world and efforts to regulate it. It also explains the Indian scenario.

Which are major developments across the world for regulation of data?

The **American Data Privacy and Protection Act** promises to radically transform the US data privacy and protection landscape. Data will only be collected to achieve the allowed purposes. It will also ban the use of “**sensitive**” data like health information and geolocation.

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GDPR is another law for regulation data. **UNCTAD** reports that 80% of all countries in the world have data protection and privacy legislation or are putting one into effect.

Why are countries falling to control and manage data?

It is only lately that data has been thought of as a **valuable resource** as well as a **potent weapon**. Historically, the greatest wealth has been created by harnessing and **exploiting natural resources**. It was land in ancient times. Timber was the next logical resource to be exploited. Then came oil. Now, **data is the new oil**. The future world powers will be created on the back of data.

How countries across the world are recognising the importance of data?

China is **leveraging data and AI**. Vladimir Putin has famously remarked that “the nation that leads in AI and data will lead the world”.

The US is waging war by choking off chips and technologies that enable AI from their **geopolitical foes**.

Much like oil, data has been used as a weapon too – influencing elections, defrauding investors, faking news.

What is the scenario in the case of India?

The Indian situation is particularly interesting. India and China are perhaps the only two large countries where digitisation and data have happened at **“population scale”**.

The big difference in India is that it has happened with large **government intervention**. The digital transformation of the West, and even China, are largely **private enterprise-led**.

The Indian digitisation story has been breath-taking in its **scope of scale**: Digital Public Infrastructure **Aadhaar, UPI and the upcoming National Health Stack and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)**, built on the **India stack** have begun to transform its society and economy.

The Indian government is treating these as **Digital Public Goods**. The **scale and richness** of consumption, generation of data is massive. There is an immense scope to **leverage** this.

The Indian approach to regulating data is **three-pronged**: The **Data Protection Bill**, the forthcoming **Telecom Bill** and a **Digital India Act** to replace IT Act.

What can be the possible outcomes of these developments?

The era of **“free data”** is over. The Big Tech companies will have to tweak their **business models**. There will be a **patchwork of laws** across the globe. **Multinational companies** dealing with data will find it very cumbersome to work across all of them.

Three, some law is better than no law. There are hopes of more **consumer protection, transparency and privacy protection** than before. However, it will continue to be an **arms race**. Governments will follow a **piecemeal approach** with data entities. These entities will try to stamp out new ways to beat new regulations.

[57. A planet in crisis – Tangible outcomes from biological diversity convention are far away](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“A planet in crisis – Tangible outcomes from biological diversity convention are far away”** published in **The Hindu** on **20th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: Biodiversity conservation

News: The article discusses about the Convention on Biological Diversity (**CBD**) that took place in Montreal, Canada recently and the concerns over biodiversity.

What are the concerns for biodiversity?

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As per the **UN estimate**, 34,000 plant and 5,200 animal species including one in eight of the world's bird species face extinction.

About **30% of breeds** of main farm animal species are currently at high risk of extinction and about 45% of the earth's original forests do not exist.

What has been the stand of India in conserving biodiversity?

India has decided to **reduce the use of pesticides** and **conserve 30% of land and sea**. These both are great steps towards conserving biodiversity.

India has also said that different nations have different responsibility towards biodiversity conservation and richer nations should take efforts and provide funds to conserve biodiversity.

What was the outcome of the current CBD and what can be the course of action?

Countries have agreed to prepare **road maps by 2024** and the **rich countries** have committed \$30 billion an annum by 2030.

However, these commitments can become successful only when countries agree to **define achievable targets** to conserve biodiversity and there is a need to take urgent action by the countries across the globe to conserve the biodiversity.

58. Nuclear fusion may offer India a clean-energy pathway

Source: The post is based on the article "**Nuclear fusion may offer India a clean-energy pathway**" published in the **Livemint** on **20th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Science and Technology developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Relevance: About nuclear fission.

News: Scientists in the United States have for the first time achieved a net gain in energy from a nuclear fusion reaction.

About the recent achievement and Nuclear fusion

Read here: [US scientists take quantum leap on the road to create nuclear fusion energy for generating power](#)

About the history of nuclear fission and its development

This happens when heavy elements like uranium and plutonium split. The science and subsequent technology of nuclear fission began with the discovery of uranium in 1789 by **Martin Klaproth**.

William Rontgen discovered ionising radiation (x-rays) a century later and **Pierre and Marrie Curie** gave the name 'radioactivity' to the phenomenon of decay with energy release.

Ernest Rutherford demonstrated radioactivity and performed the first artificially induced nuclear reaction in 1917. Rutherford established the nuclear structure of the atom and radioactive decay as a nuclear process.

Lise Meitner and Otto Frisch first used the term 'fission' and experimentally calculated the energy released.

During World War II, the world developed fission bombs and then adapted fission for civilian nuclear technology. Since that time, much effort has gone into making nuclear reactors safe and reliable.

Read more: [Nuclear Fusion Technology: Evolution, Challenges and Future Potential – Explained, pointwise](#)

About the history of nuclear fusion

Hydrogen had been produced for many centuries, it was only identified as an element by **Henry Cavendish** in 1766. **Helium** was discovered a century later by **Jules Janssen and Norman Lockyer**.

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In 1920, **Arthur Eddington** suggested that hydrogen-helium fusion could be the source of stellar energy. Similarly, fusion was achieved in the operation of the first hydrogen bomb in 1952.

The recent experiment proved a sustained and controlled fusion with a positive energy yield. Apart from this, this year itself, **a) China's EAST reactor** established a record-breaking sustained reaction of 17 minutes, **b) UK scientists at the Joint European Torus (JET) laboratory** announced that they had generated a record breaking 59 megajoules of sustained fusion energy.

Note: *Einstein's mass-energy equivalence provides the theoretical framework for fusion as well as fission.*

What is the significance of nuclear fusion?

Read more: [Breakthrough in nuclear fusion, and why it is significant](#)

How India is joining the nuclear fusion race?

a) India joined the US, UK, EU, Japan and Russia in a consortium to establish International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), **b)** India's own attempt at an experimental fusion reactor continues with the SST-2 tokamak at the Institute of Plasma Research in Gujarat.

India should improve its nuclear fusion research as **a)** India is not endowed with the required resources either for hydrocarbon energy or nuclear fission-based energy. So, India's interest and investment in nuclear fusion are essential, **b)** India **declared to become net-zero in 2070**. Focussing on nuclear fusion will provide a practical and preferred complement to renewables.

59. [About the Competition Act 2002: Gatekeepers of digital markets](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Gatekeepers of digital markets**" published in the **Business Standard** on **20th November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: About Competition Act 2002.

News: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has recently issued a series of orders penalising entities for abusing their dominant positions in digital markets. These orders expect digital platforms to serve as gatekeepers to maintain market contestability.

What is the need for Competition Act 2002?

Digital platforms provide a gateway between consumers and producers and must not impose terms that restrict users' ability to compete and innovate. According to the CCI, any condition imposed on business users by the gatekeepers or platform operators should be fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory.

By abusing market power (dominance), digital platforms can make it difficult for others to do business. Hence, the Competition Act 2002 (Act) proscribes abuse of dominance and empowers the CCI to protect businesses from such abuse.

Read more: [Digital markets must be defined well for competition regulation](#)

What are the concerns associated with the Competition Act 2002?

The Act guides the demarcation of relevant markets, determines its dominance in the said market, and defines whether its conduct amounts to abuse or not. But such guidance may not be helpful in the case of digital markets/ platforms. This is because

1) Digital markets/ platforms **can restrict access to markets by denying or restricting access to sellers** in such platforms. Hence, the platform decides what to be consumed and what to be produced in an economy, **2)** The firm providing the platform may be competing with other firms and, therefore, having a **conflict of interests**. For example, a firm may be producing games, and listing games of the same genre, including the ones produced by it, on its platform.

3) A platform enjoys certain externalities that enable it to **wield huge market power**. For instance, the **platform has vast data collected from its users**, which it may use to strategise

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digital advertising, **4) Digital platforms create entry barriers to digital markets.** For instance, platforms usually create networks of users. They may attract new users by making it free to connect with existing users of the network. The larger the number of users in the network, the larger is the network externality.

Note: These concerns, to some extent, exist in brick-and-mortar space as well. But, they do not own the data hence, have trust.

Read more: [CCI \(Competition Commission of India\): Provisions, Working and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the recommended amendments to the Competition Act 2002?

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce recommended that **a) The Act should prescribe norms for the identification of gatekeeper platforms for stricter oversight, b) The CCI should formulate a mandatory code of conduct that comprises a set of core principles, as well as a list of hardwired dos and don'ts for gatekeepers.**

How can the Digital Markets Act of the EU help India to frame a better Competition Act of 2002? The Digital Markets Act of the European Union adopts ex-ante regulations to make digital markets fairer and more contestable. For example, it **a) Defines gatekeepers as entities that have significant market influence as well as the threshold of turnover or users, b) Places a set of negative and positive obligations on such entities, and c) Bars targeted advertising and the use of personal data gathered from one platform to offer services on another.**

India's **Competition Amendment Bill** should include these provisions and ensure fair competition.

60. [The Biodiversity Commitment](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**The Biodiversity Commitment**” published in **The Indian Express** on **21st December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

News: The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has been concluded in the Montreal, Canada recently. The Montreal meeting was the 15th edition of this conference also known as COP15.

What is CBD?

It is a 1993 agreement that meet every two years to work on a global plan to halt biodiversity loss and restore natural ecosystems.

It is not just about conservation and restoration of ecosystems. It is also about sustainable use of natural resources, and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of these resources. It was formed in the Rio Earth Summit 1992.

Read here: [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#)

What were the three major climate conventions that were formed in the Rio Earth Summit 1992?

The three conventions were – a) The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**), b) The Convention on Biological Diversity (**CBD**) and c) the Convention to Combat Desertification (**CCD**).

All the three environmental conventions seek to address the issues that overlap among them and the success of any one helps the cause of the others too.

For example, climate change is one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss while changes in land and ocean use have an impact on climate change. Land degradation appears as a cause as well as effect in both climate change and biodiversity loss.

Therefore, the issues overlap, even though all the three hold their separate CoPs.

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What are the outcomes of the current Montreal meeting?

Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) – It contains four goals and 23 targets that need to be achieved by 2030. It is being compared to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change that is guiding global climate action.

The four goals and 23 targets in the GBF is commonly referred to as the **30×30 target**. It means to protect at least 30 per cent of the world's lands, oceans and coastal areas by 2030.

Restoring/Maintaining the natural ecosystem – The overall goal is to ensure that all natural ecosystems are either maintained, enhanced or restored substantially with an overall increase in the area of natural ecosystems by 2050.

Reduction in Extinction – Another goal is to ensure a ten-fold reduction in extinction rate of species, A recent report said that about 1 million species face extinction if urgent action is not taken.

Reducing food wastage – A commitment has been made to reduce global food wastage by half, reduce the risk of pesticides and other chemicals by half, and cut at least US\$ 500 billion every year from subsidies that harm biodiversity.

Note: The meeting in Montreal that concluded was the second part of COP15, the first part was held in Kunming in China last year. Kunming was supposed to hold the entire COP15 but due to Covid-19 restrictions, it could only organise a hybrid event in October last year.

What were the previous agreements of the CBD and what are the challenges?

There were two supplementary agreements – a) the Cartagena Protocol of 2003 and b) the Nagoya Protocol of 2014.

Cartagena Protocol – The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety seeks to protect biodiversity from genetically modified organisms by ensuring their safe handling, transport and use. **For example**, the interaction of GM crops with nature are not yet fully understood which is why they are cultivated on a separate farm.

Nagoya Protocol – the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing deals with the commercial utilisation of biological and genetic resources.

It asks the host countries to provide access to its genetic resources in a legal, fair and non-arbitrary manner and offers them a fair and equitable share of benefits arising out of the utilisation of those resources.

Moreover, countries in 2010, at COP10 in Nagoya, Japan had agreed to a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity containing 20 targets also known as the **Aichi targets**.

However, a recent report showed that none of these targets were achieved at the end of the decade (2010-20). Therefore, implementing the GBF and the current targets will remain a challenge.

61. [Why the proposal to raise import duties on non-essential items must be abandoned](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why the proposal to raise import duties on non-essential items must be abandoned**” published in **The Indian Express** on **21st December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: higher import duty and problems associated with it

News: The government is planning to raise import duties on all non-essential items. The recent trend also shows that there has been an increase in the import duties which is not good for the nation.

What has been the recent trends on the import duty?

India's customs duty on non-agricultural products had come down from 150 per cent to 10 per cent between 1991-92 and 2007-08.

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However, this trend has been reversed and the country's average applied import tariff which stood at 13.5 per cent in 2014 rose to 18.3 per cent in 2021.

The last 4-5 years have also seen an **increase in the import duty** in a range of products such as solar modules and cells, mobile phone parts, etc.

Further, the government is again planning to increase the import duty which is not good.

Why is the recent plan to increase import duty on non-essential items is not a good idea? The government is trying to increase duty on those products which are fully grown in the market such as Giorgio Armani perfumes, Johnnie Walker single malts, etc. The decision shows the **protectionist nature** of the government.

It also takes India back in the **pre reform era** and **Nehruvian era** where import duties were imposed to protect the domestic industries. However, things have changed now.

The problem with this is that it favours one industry over the other and what may be output for one is input for another. Thus, it affects the overall growth of the nations.

Further, the focus of the businesses also shifts to those products that are giving higher returns and has a greater market. Thus, impacting a balanced growth and the consumers and user industries being the losers.

What is the way ahead?

India is heading towards **Atmanirbhar Bharat**. It means India should produce not just for itself but also for the world and earn foreign exchange to be able to import things it cannot produce competitively.

Therefore, atmanirbharta should never act as a door for protectionism and government should rethink its plan on raising import duty.

62. [India's cyber threats: Defending against cyber threats](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Defending against cyber threats**" published in the **Business Standard** on **21st November 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Basics of cyber security.

Relevance: About India's cyber threats.

News: The recent cyberattack at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences is a stark reminder that no entity is safe from cyber threats.

About India's cyber threats

-Based on the data from the **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)**, 1.2 million cybersecurity incidents were reported in 2020, 1.4 million in 2021, and 0.67 million up to June in 2022.

-Google in contrast stated that India witnessed 18 million cyberattacks and 200,000 threats a day in the first quarter of 2022 alone.

-The World Economic Forum, in its 2022 Global Risk Report, identified cyber threats as among the top five global risks.

How EU is tackling cyber threats?

EU's General Data Protection Regulations(GDPR): The EU expects companies to maintain the integrity of critical infrastructure, systems, and services, and is steadily upping the requirements through its Network and Information Security directives. Further, the EU has put in place guidelines regarding the reporting of data breaches.

Read more: [Are ransomware attacks increasing in India?](#)

What are the various recommendations to tackle India's cyber threats?

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC): a) It proposed amendments to its Cybersecurity Rules and put out two papers for discussion, b) Highlighting Cybersecurity Governance, the SEC

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expects companies to disclose the extent of the board's oversight of cybersecurity risks, and the management's role in assessing and managing cybersecurity-related risks, and in implementing the company's cybersecurity policies, procedures, and strategies.

The Kotak committee: The committee **put the onus of dealing with cybersecurity on the risk management committee** of the board.

Must read: [Held To Ransom – Healthcare sector is a sitting duck to cybercriminals. AIIMS & other hospitals must shore up security systems](#)

What needs to be done to reduce India's cyber threats?

Follow proper cyber risk management: This includes not only preventing breaches but also placing guidelines regarding the process to be followed once there is a cyberattack. This will help minimise financially and mitigate reputational damage when a breach occurs.

There should be clarity regarding reporting data breaches: The board members must have financial acumen, familiarity, and skills to understand cyber reporting and the ability to interact with third parties and internal resources to effectively oversee the organisation's cybersecurity architecture.

[63. API crisis, again: PLI in key pharma ingredients was supposed to reduce dependence on China. But the job's only partly done](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**API crisis, again: PLI in key pharma ingredients was supposed to reduce dependence on China. But the job's only partly done**" published in **The Times of India** on **22nd December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economy

Relevance: India dependency on imports for APIs

News: The article discusses the impact of dependency on China for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and measures adopted by India to counter it.

What is the recent issue?

The prices of key Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), which are the essential ingredients in making medicines, have increased recently by 12-25%

This is because China has stocked basic medicines leading to a shortage in the supply chain and increase in the price.

Why India imports APIs from China?

India has the capability to make many key APIs. However, it is the cheap cost provided by China that has made India dependent on imports and incapable of making key APIs.

APIs and key starting materials used in the production made up 63% of total pharma imports for 2018-19. This highlights the need for India to reduce its imports.

What has the performance of PLI scheme in pharma ingredients?

India introduced a PLI scheme in July 2020 to encourage domestic manufacture of a target group of 41 products, including aspirin and penicillin.

According to the recent data, 51 companies had received approval under the PLI scheme to begin new plants to make APIs. However, only about 25-30% of the companies have begun manufacturing.

Even though India has prioritised the PLI scheme through budgetary support, it has not seen the desired result.

What is the way ahead?

India has a good history in pharmaceutical manufacturing and has all the capabilities. Therefore, India needs to use its strength and execute its PLI scheme rapidly to reduce its dependence on China.

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64. [With India crossing China's population next year, how we can create mass prosperity](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**With India crossing China's population next year, how we can create mass prosperity**” published in **The Indian Express** on **22nd December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and employment

Relevance: Issues related to the growth and development of economy

News: The article explains the need for investing in human capital and formal jobs for the prosperity of the large Indian population.

According to estimates, sometime in April 2023, India's population will exceed the population of China.

Why India should focus on human capital and formal jobs?

A strong case for **human capital-driven productivity** is India's **software employment**. A meagre 0.8% of workers generate 8% of GDP.

The **remittances** from India's overseas population crossed \$100 billion last year. A **World Bank** report suggests that the **qualitative shift** during the previous five years from **low-skilled, informal employment in Gulf countries to high-skilled formal jobs in high-income countries** is significant.

Last year, the US replaced the UAE as the single biggest source country with 23% of remittances.

Why are monetary and fiscal policies not solutions for resolving all growth-related challenges?

Monetary policy is cannot resolve growth challenges as **credit availability** is a bigger problem in India than credit cost. If **fiscal deficits** could make countries rich, no country would be poor.

Global experiences suggest where governments spend money and how this spending is financed matters more than how much is spent.

Covid made enormous **fiscal and monetary policy demands**. Western central banks are struggling to shrink their balance sheets. Rich-country borrowing rates have risen by 300% plus and inflation hurts the poor the most.

So, India avoided these fiscal and monetary policy excesses.

What should be the focus area of the budget for generating human capital?

The Finance Bill must target **productivity and continuity** by legislating **human capital and formal job reforms** previously proposed. The government should

a) Reduce the implementation timeline for the powerful **National Education Policy 2020** from 15 years to five years, **b)** Abolish **separate licensing requirements** for online degrees and freely allow all the 1,000-plus accredited universities to launch online learning, **c)** Notify the **four labour codes** for all central-list industries while appointing a tripartite committee to converge them into one labour code by the next budget, **d)** Continue **EODB reforms** by designating every enterprise's PAN number as its **Universal Enterprise Number**, **e)** Explode manufacturing employment by abolishing the **Factories Act** and requiring all employers to comply under each state's **Shops and Establishment Act**, **f)** Reduce the gap between documented salary and in hand salary by making employees' provident fund contributions optional but raising employer PF contributions from the current 12% to 13%.

What is the difference between the Indian and Chinese scenarios?

India and China's per capita GDP was equal in 1991. It is now five times higher for China. Unlike when China started serious reform in 1978, India today faces a more **unfavourable global context** of growth, exports, and manufacturing.

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China's reforms were faster and crisper without the **fixed costs of democracy**. But this deficit led to their unchallenged policies of **Cultural Revolution, one-child norm, and zero-Covid**. India's democracy is a strength. It reflects India's ability to **reconcile diverse aspirations**.

65. [Stay with science, go slow on GM crops Transgenic technology](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Stay with science, go slow on GM crops Transgenic technology**" published in **The Indian Express** on **22nd December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance: Recombinant technology.

News: The article explains the issues related to HT GM crops.

Why precaution is required for the environmental release of GM crops?

Transgenic technology is **uncontrollable and irreversible** after environmental release. Genetically Modified Organisms propagate themselves and proliferate. This process cannot be reversed.

Therefore, any **deliberate environmental release** has to be only after a thorough, **independent, peer-reviewed assessment** of long-term implications.

What is the current status of GM crops across the world?

More than 25 years after their introduction, GM crops are still globally grown in **just 29 out of 172 countries**. Moreover, 91% of GM crop area continues to be in just five countries named USA, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, and India.

Most countries in Europe and Japan, Israel, and Russia do not grow GM crops. In China, Bt cotton area has been declining and **non-GM hybrid technology** is used for rapeseed/mustard.

Only two traits are present in over 85% of GM crops grown — **herbicide tolerance and insect resistance**.

What are the issues with HT crops?

HT crops result in not only **ecological damage** but **human health impacts** for consumers. Like tobacco, the effects take a longer time to manifest.

According to independent research on GM crops and associated herbicides, their impact on human health may be probable **carcinogenicity, neuro-toxicity, reproductive health problems, organ damage** etc.

The ongoing litigations in the Supreme Court are about serious shortcomings in our **regulatory regime**. Minutes of meetings of the regulatory body **GEAC** and the "**guidelines and protocols**" on the regulator's website reflect an absence of regulatory protocols for HT crops.

The **technical expert committee** appointed by the SC and the unanimous multi-party reports of **two parliamentary standing committees** have exposed serious lapses and inadequacies in **bio-safety testing** of HT crops.

What are the concerns associated with the approval of GM mustard?

GM mustard's yield increase claims were based on a comparison with an old, non-hybrid variety. There were several **higher-yielding mustard hybrids** that should have been the comparators.

Now, it is claimed that DMH-11's **parental lines** will be very useful for breeding **better hybrids**. But, the countries with the highest yields in the world do not use this **GM HT technique**. The benefits claimed, hence, are therefore questionable.

No independent health expert participated in the committees that looked at GM mustard safety. To this day, **biosafety data** of GM mustard has not been posted on the regulator's website for **independent scrutiny**.

It is claimed **GM mustard** is necessary to reduce India's **edible oil import bill**. Most of the edible oil we import is **cheap, non-GM, palm oil**.

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What is the way forward for yield improvement of mustard?

For mustard yield improvement, **safe agro-ecological solutions** such as the “**system of mustard intensification**” are showing significant yield increases. This technology should be promoted, not GM HT mustard of dubious yields and safety.

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69. [Taking the lead on regulation of digital assets](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Taking the lead on regulation of digital assets**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Security

Relevance: measures to curb digital financial crimes

News: The G20’s Finance Track discussions came up with the regulation of Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs) to curb financial crimes such as money laundering and terror financing as a priority.

What are the concerns linked to VDAs?

VDAs are often misused for financial crimes. There is – **a)** lack of proper regulatory measures, **b)** lack of reporting and transparency norms, **c)** absence of international consensus on regulatory design.

Therefore, India has a critical role to play in shaping the global regulatory environment as it is **one of the highest-ranked countries in terms of VDA adoption** and also heading the presidency of G20.

What measures can be taken by India?

India can allow anti-money laundering (AML) authorities to have control over VDA transactions, have power to impose controls upon them and prosecute in the event of any misuse.

These principles are included in the Financial Action Task Force Guidelines on Virtual Asset Transactions (**FATF Guidelines**). These guidelines have been adopted by various jurisdictions, including the EU, Japan and Singapore.

What are Financial Action Task Force Guidelines on Virtual Asset Transactions?

It prescribes minimum **AML/CFT standards** that countries should use to prevent the **misuse of VDA transactions**. The Guidelines are applicable to VDA service providers of member states like **India**.

The key features of guidelines are – **a)** license/registration requirements and extensive reporting and record-keeping obligations for VDA service providers, **b)** verifying the customer and beneficiary’s identities for all transactions exceeding \$1,000, **c)** it requires VDA service providers to perform enhanced obligations such as tracking the customer’s IP address to ensure there are no links to illicit activities when a transaction is with a higher-risk country.

This AML/CFT framework in India exists under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)**. It also includes reporting obligations for overseas transactions that fall under the ambit of suspicious transactions.

However, PMLA does not apply to the VDA industry.

What is the way ahead?

Even though PMLA does not apply to VDAs, the **government has the power** to make the VDA industry come under the PMLA. This would make VDAs to report offshore transactions and be subject to regulatory framework.

Therefore, the current discussion of G20 on **VDAs** and India coming up with the **Digital Data Protection Bill and the Digital India Act** will ensure Indians and digital businesses operate under the **rights and responsibility framework**.

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70. [A tall order – on Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “A tall order”, published in Business Standard on 23rd December, 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3, Environment, Biodiversity Conservation

News: 15th Conference of Parties (COP 15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, has managed to conclude **Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)** agreement.

The agreement may prove to be tough to implement despite providing an elaborate financing mechanism.

Read – [Features of new COP 15 agreement](#)

What are the challenges in achieving COP 15 agreement targets?

The bulk of the world’s vital bio-resources are unprotected. For example, at present only about 17 per cent of the terrestrial, and less than 10 per cent of the marine areas, are under some kind of protection.

Financing these targets would not be an easy task. It looks unachievable after looking at the result of commitment, of \$100 billion a year for the climate mitigation fund, by developed countries in 2009.

Living Planet Report 2022 of the Worldwide Fund for Nature reports that nearly 34,000 plant and 5,200 animal species, including one-eighth of the bird species, face the threat of extinction. Main reasons behind threats are Habitat destruction, over-exploitation, harmful anthropogenic activity, air and water pollution, and climate change.

How India has been able to make changes to the agreement?

India’s suggestion to grant freedom to adopt the targets according to country’s position, priorities and capabilities, has been adopted.

India was able to keep references to the agricultural and fisheries subsidies out of the agreement. Some of the desired goals of India, linked to indigenous people and knowledge have become part of agreement, such as:

- Sharing of monetary and non-monetary benefits with indigenous people, which is accruing from the utilisation of genetic resources
- Protection of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.

71. [The uncontrolled re-entries of satellites](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The uncontrolled re-entries of satellites**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of space

Relevance– Issues related to safety of space assets

News– The article explains the issue of uncontrolled re-entry of satellites.

What are the stages of a rocket launch?

Today, there are more than 6,000 satellites in orbit, most of them in **low-earth and geostationary orbits**.

Rockets have **multiple stages**. Once a stage has increased the rocket’s altitude and velocity by a certain amount, the rocket sheds it.

Some rockets jettison all their larger stages before reaching the **destination orbit**. A smaller engine then moves the payload to its final orbit. Others carry the payload to the orbit, then perform a **deorbit manoeuvre** to begin their descent. In both cases, rocket stages come back down in controlled or uncontrolled ways.

What is an uncontrolled re-entry?

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In an uncontrolled re-entry, the rocket stage simply falls. Its path down is determined by its **shape, angle of descent, air currents** and other characteristics. It will also **disintegrate** as it falls.

Most rocket parts have landed in oceans principally because earth's surface has more water than land. But many have dropped on land as well.

Some pieces burn up entirely while others don't. But because of the speed at which they're travelling, debris can be deadly.

Why are scientists worried about the re-entries?

Parts of a **SpaceX Falcon 9** that fell down in Indonesia in 2016 included two "refrigerator-sized fuel tanks". If re-entering stages still hold fuel, **atmospheric and terrestrial chemical contamination** is another risk.

The USA, it requires all launches to keep the chance of a casualty from a re-entering body to be below 0.01%. But the U.S. Air Force and NASA have waived this requirement on multiple occasions.

A July 2022 study by researchers in Canada found that this threshold is **arbitrary** and makes little sense in an era when **new technologies and mission profiles** enable **controlled re-entries**. Many places have also become more densely populated.

There is no **international binding agreement** to ensure rocket stages always perform controlled re-entries nor on the technologies with which to do so. The **Liability Convention 1972** requires countries to pay for damages, not prevent them.

A **2021 report of the International Space Safety Foundation** said, "an impact anywhere on an airliner with debris of mass above 300 grams would produce a **catastrophic failure**. It means all people on board would be killed".

How can the damages be minimised?

Satellite bodies should aim for an ocean in order to avoid **human casualties**.

Future solutions should be extended to re-entering satellites as well. **Advances in electronics and fabrication** have made way for smaller satellites, which are easier to build and launch in large numbers.

72. [Why Beijing's rising maritime clout calls for a joint India-Japan nuclear submarine project](#)

Source– The post is based on the article "**Why Beijing's rising maritime clout calls for a joint India-Japan nuclear submarine project**" published in the **Business Standard** on **23rd December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Issues related to manufacturing sector

News– The article explains the status of the toy industry in India. It also explains the issues faced by this sector.

What are the changes in the toy sector in recent years?

In the last four years, **India's imports** of toys, games and sports requisites and their parts and accessories declined 39%.

In the same period, **Chinese imports** dipped 45% in 2021-22.

In the case of only toys, exports increased by 61.38% in 2021-22. Imports of toys alone have dropped 70%.

What is the game-changer for the industry in terms of competing with Chinese imports?

One of the major reasons for this **import-export shift** is a sharp increase in **basic customs duty** from 20 to 60% in February 2020.

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This was followed by the decision to bring toys under compulsory **Bureau of Indian Standards certification** starting January 1, 2021. This **quality control** became applicable to both domestic and overseas manufacturers.

What is the current status of the toy industry in India?

According to the **Toy Association of India**, the size of the industry was around Rs **20,000 crore** in retail value in 2020. Out of this, only around Rs 5,000 crore came from **local manufacturing**. Based on a report by **IMARC**, a market research company, the Indian toys market size reached \$1.5 billion in 2022. It may touch \$3 billion by 2028, a compounded annual growth rate of 12.2%.

At present, India is exporting to around 30 countries.

Local manufacturing and the involvement of more micro entrepreneurs and start-ups is on the rise. More than 100 new registered manufacturers entered the sector in the last two years. Local production has gone up 20-30%.

What are issues faced by the toy industry?

There are issues related to **quality**. A study by the **Quality Council of India** in 2019 showed that out of 121 different varieties of toys procured only 33% passed quality tests.

Mass manufacturers are not prepared to come under the **BIS umbrella** owing to the **level of paperwork** and **heavy compliances burden** it imposes. Majority of manufactures fall under the MSME segment.

Chinese toys are still available in the Indian market and only around 1,000 local manufacturers have registered under BIS.

In India, the number of **electronic manufacturers** is relatively low. We are specially importing **chips and ICs** from countries like China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

India still lacks a **R&D centre** or a design institute to drive the changes in the sector.

73. [Taking the lead on regulation of digital assets](#)

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Syllabus: **GS 3 – Security**

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This AML/CFT framework in India exists under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)**. It also includes reporting obligations for overseas transactions that fall under the ambit of suspicious transactions.

However, PMLA does not apply to the VDA industry.

What is the way ahead?

Even though PMLA does not apply to VDAs, the **government has the power** to make the VDA industry come under the PMLA. This would make VDAs to report offshore transactions and be subject to regulatory framework.

Therefore, the current discussion of G20 on **VDAs** and India coming up with the **Digital Data Protection Bill and the Digital India Act** will ensure Indians and digital businesses operate under the **rights and responsibility framework**.

74. [A tall order – on Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article "A tall order", published in Business Standard on 23rd December, 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3, Environment, Biodiversity Conservation

News: 15th Conference of Parties (COP 15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, has managed to conclude **Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)** agreement.

The agreement may prove to be tough to implement despite providing an elaborate financing mechanism.

Read – [Features of new COP 15 agreement](#)

What are the challenges in achieving COP 15 agreement targets?

The bulk of the world's vital bio-resources are unprotected. For example, at present only about 17 per cent of the terrestrial, and less than 10 per cent of the marine areas, are under some kind of protection.

Financing these targets would not be an easy task. It looks unachievable after looking at the result of commitment, of \$100 billion a year for the climate mitigation fund, by developed countries in 2009.

Living Planet Report 2022 of the Worldwide Fund for Nature reports that nearly 34,000 plant and 5,200 animal species, including one-eighth of the bird species, face the threat of extinction. Main reasons behind threats are Habitat destruction, over-exploitation, harmful anthropogenic activity, air and water pollution, and climate change.

How India has been able to make changes to the agreement?

India's suggestion to grant freedom to adopt the targets according to country's position, priorities and capabilities, has been adopted.

India was able to keep references to the agricultural and fisheries subsidies out of the agreement. Some of the desired goals of India, linked to indigenous people and knowledge have become part of agreement, such as:

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- Sharing of monetary and non-monetary benefits with indigenous people, which is accruing from the utilisation of genetic resources
- Protection of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.

75. [The uncontrolled re-entries of satellites](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The uncontrolled re-entries of satellites**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of space

Relevance– Issues related to safety of space assets

News– The article explains the issue of uncontrolled re-entry of satellites.

What are the stages of a rocket launch?

Today, there are more than 6,000 satellites in orbit, most of them in **low-earth and geostationary orbits**.

Rockets have **multiple stages**. Once a stage has increased the rocket’s altitude and velocity by a certain amount, the rocket sheds it.

Some rockets jettison all their larger stages before reaching the **destination orbit**. A smaller engine then moves the payload to its final orbit. Others carry the payload to the orbit, then perform a **deorbit manoeuvre** to begin their descent. In both cases, rocket stages come back down in controlled or uncontrolled ways.

What is an uncontrolled re-entry?

In an uncontrolled re-entry, the rocket stage simply falls. Its path down is determined by its **shape, angle of descent, air currents** and other characteristics. It will also **disintegrate** as it falls.

Most rocket parts have landed in oceans principally because earth’s surface has more water than land. But many have dropped on land as well.

Some pieces burn up entirely while others don’t. But because of the speed at which they’re travelling, debris can be deadly.

Why are scientists worried about the re-entries?

Parts of a **SpaceX Falcon 9** that fell down in Indonesia in 2016 included two “refrigerator-sized fuel tanks”. If re-entering stages still hold fuel, **atmospheric and terrestrial chemical contamination** is another risk.

The USA, it requires all launches to keep the chance of a casualty from a re-entering body to be below 0.01%. But the U.S. Air Force and NASA have waived this requirement on multiple occasions.

A July 2022 study by researchers in Canada found that this threshold is **arbitrary** and makes little sense in an era when **new technologies and mission profiles** enable **controlled re-entries**. Many places have also become more densely populated.

There is no **international binding agreement** to ensure rocket stages always perform controlled re-entries nor on the technologies with which to do so. The **Liability Convention 1972** requires countries to pay for damages, not prevent them.

A **2021 report of the International Space Safety Foundation** said, “an impact anywhere on an airliner with debris of mass above 300 grams would produce a **catastrophic failure**. It means all people on board would be killed”.

How can the damages be minimised?

Satellite bodies should aim for an ocean in order to avoid **human casualties**.

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Future solutions should be extended to re-entering satellites as well. **Advances in electronics and fabrication** have made way for smaller satellites, which are easier to build and launch in large numbers.

76. [Why Beijing's rising maritime clout calls for a joint India-Japan nuclear submarine project](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Why Beijing's rising maritime clout calls for a joint India-Japan nuclear submarine project**” published in the **Business Standard** on **23rd December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Issues related to manufacturing sector

News– The article explains the status of the toy industry in India. It also explains the issues faced by this sector.

What are the changes in the toy sector in recent years?

In the last four years, **India's imports** of toys, games and sports requisites and their parts and accessories declined 39%.

In the same period, **Chinese imports** dipped 45% in 2021-22.

In the case of only toys, exports increased by 61.38% in 2021-22. Imports of toys alone have dropped 70%.

What is the game-changer for the industry in terms of competing with Chinese imports?

One of the major reasons for this **import-export shift** is a sharp increase in **basic customs duty** from 20 to 60% in February 2020.

This was followed by the decision to bring toys under compulsory **Bureau of Indian Standards certification** starting January 1, 2021. This **quality control** became applicable to both domestic and overseas manufacturers.

What is the current status of the toy industry in India?

According to the **Toy Association of India**, the size of the industry was around Rs **20,000 crore** in retail value in 2020. Out of this, only around Rs 5,000 crore came from **local manufacturing**. Based on a report by **IMARC**, a market research company, the Indian toys market size reached \$1.5 billion in 2022. It may touch \$3 billion by 2028, a compounded annual growth rate of 12.2%.

At present, India is exporting to around 30 countries.

Local manufacturing and the involvement of more micro entrepreneurs and start-ups is on the rise. More than 100 new registered manufacturers entered the sector in the last two years. Local production has gone up 20-30%.

What are issues faced by the toy industry?

There are issues related to **quality**. A study by the **Quality Council of India** in 2019 showed that out of 121 different varieties of toys procured only 33% passed quality tests.

Mass manufacturers are not prepared to come under the **BIS umbrella** owing to the **level of paperwork** and **heavy compliances burden** it imposes. Majority of manufactures fall under the MSME segment.

Chinese toys are still available in the Indian market and only around 1,000 local manufacturers have registered under BIS.

In India, the number of **electronic manufacturers** is relatively low. We are specially importing **chips and ICs** from countries like China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

India still lacks a **R&D centre** or a design institute to drive the changes in the sector.

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77. [With REDD, the global economy can remunerate nations saving rainforests](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**With REDD, the global economy can remunerate nations saving rainforests**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

Relevance: About Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation’ (REDD).

News: The idea of incentivizing countries to protect forests first surfaced in the 2005 COP meeting held in Montreal. It was finally approved at COP meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt this year. About ‘Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation’ (REDD)

Read here: [REDD and REDD+](#)

The key idea behind REDD: Forests capture and store huge amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂). This is of great value in a world facing climate change.

The REDD mechanism has only been fully approved in 2022.

About Coalition for Rainforest Nations: *It has more than 50 members. The members are primarily tropical countries. Its purpose is to work within a UNFCCC framework and the COP meetings. The Coalition sends its representatives to these meetings to argue for its goals to be included in the COP agenda and produce papers supporting these arguments.*

About REDD offsets and Carbon credit

Claiming credits under the REDD system will require very good satellite imagery of forests with detailed case studies. Most member countries have been accumulating such data. In recent years, many American and European companies have announced they want to buy offsets to be carbon-neutral. So, there’s a huge increase in the market.

Why countries are incentivised to protect forests?

a) A hectare of tropical forest absorbs 50 to 100 tons of CO₂ per annum, **b)** Forests are huge supports for biodiversity. The vast majority of the world’s animals, birds and insects, each with its own-natural service, live in forests.

c) Countries maintaining forests, found usually in developing economies. Hence, forests can produce carbon credits on the basis of the CO₂ they capture and store. These can be sold on international carbon markets. REDD offsets will take a significant part of this trade and provide resources to tropical countries.

The entire process of REDD offset was finally passed this year at COP-27. This offers a good future for REDD.

78. [India’s Chipko movement changed the world’s vision](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India’s Chipko movement changed the world’s vision**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

Relevance: About India’s Chipko movement.

News: India’s Chipko movement has lessons for social movements globally.

What is the reason behind Chipko movement?

The biogeography of Chipko was shaped by both colonial and post-colonial administrations. This is because economically, locals were excluded from such forests, and often dealt with punitively and in an unaccountable manner.

During pre-Independence era

There was a steady attempt by the British authorities and the forest department to carve out large parts of forested areas in the middle and upper Himalayas for extraction. This is because of the British economic interests encompassed shipbuilding, the expansion of the railways, etc.

The Britishers have done this by;

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a) Limiting local's access to land: Demarcating lands as reserved and revenue forests to be used by the colonial regime and curtailing local community management and use of these.

b) Converting forests into resources: The colonial government has transformed some of the forests into monocultural plantations like pine to help build the railways, extract turpentine, etc. Situation after Post-independence

a) The contractor system used by the forest department for felling trees engaged labour from outside, **b)** The government allocated areas for cutting with little concern for the slopes and villages nearby, often leading to landslides, etc.

Chipko emerged as a reaction to all these pressures.

Must read: [The nature and scope of environmental movements in independent India](#)

What are the significances of the Chipko movement?

Chipko became extremely well-known in the 1980s. This is because, **1)** The movement had diverse groups of people uniting within it, **b)** The movement got the attention of people globally. The imagery of women hugging trees captured the imagination of people worldwide, **c)** Chipko is a showcase of complete social movement,

Note: *Silent Valley movement in Kerala led to the creation of the ministry of environment and forests in Kerala.*

Even today, Chipko had an enormous impact on India and the world's environmental vision and imagination. It offers new lessons to social movements globally.

79. [A busy navy's challenges](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**A busy navy's challenges**" published in **Business Standard** on **24th December 2022**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Security.**

Relevance: Challenges with the Indian Navy.

News: The Indian Navy has been expanding its fleet day by day. Despite this, challenges still exist for the Indian Navy.

What are the challenges associated with the Indian Navy?

Delay in construction: Ships required for the Indian Navy take **more than twice the time of China** which is around seven to nine years. Even after taking such a long time, required support such as the right long-range, air-defence missiles, heavyweight torpedoes, etc. remain missing.

Inadequate number of ships: 2019 and 2020 saw the commissioning of just one submarine and a corvette while 2018 saw no major addition to the fleet. Further, as per a report, no aircraft has landed on either of India's carriers in the last two years.

Technological delay creating challenges: China uses advanced technology in its ships with more fuel and a heavier weapons load. China is now planning for war on the sea with killer drones and unmanned vessels. It is also developing a naval base around the Indian Ocean rim.

Limited defence budgets: India has limited budgets for its defence due to which there are fewer orders given for the construction of ships. This ultimately hampers the Navy fleet. The Indian Navy mostly has old boats, and it requires changes with the new ones.

Therefore, there are multiple challenges with the Indian Navy, even though its fleet is expanding, and new additions are being made.

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80. [On GM, follow the science](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**On GM, follow the science**” published in **The Indian Express** on **24th December 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of biotechnology

Relevance: Use of recombinant technology.

News: The article explains the issues related to the environmental release of the GM mustard variety called DMH-11.

GM is a disruptive technology because it can bring about targeted changes in crop varieties that cannot be achieved through normal breeding of plant lines.

What is the need for hybrid technology?

Hybrid plants that result from the crossing of **genetically diverse parents** generally demonstrate **higher yields and wider adaptation**.

Hybrids typically show **20-25% yield increases** over conventional varieties. It can play an important role in boosting the yields of rapeseed mustard. India’s current mustard yield is 1.2-1.3 tonnes per hectare. It is roughly half of the global average.

In 2021-22, India spent Rs 1,56,800 crore on the import of 14.1 mt of edible oils. Hybrid technology can lead to **the reduction of import dependence** on edible oil.

What is the role of GM hybrids?

Hybrid seed production requires an **efficient male sterility and fertility-restoration system**. The purpose is to ensure that one of the **parent lines** can be crossed with the pollen from only the other parent, even as the resultant plant is fertile.

The existing mustard hybrids have limitations of **sterility breakdown** under certain environmental conditions. It results in **lower seed purity**.

The **GM “Barnase-Barstar” system** provides an alternative route for hybridisation in mustard that is robust and addresses the **sterility breakdown** problems. This technology has been successfully deployed in other countries.

DMH-11 uses the **“barnase-barstar” system** with some improvements to breed the hybrid.

What are the arguments against the allegations of safety on GM mustard?

DMH-11 has undergone all the required **regulatory testing processes**. It was tested in confined field trials at multiple locations. It showed around 28% higher yield over the national best mustard variety **Varuna**.

It has been subjected to all the biosafety tests required under the officially stipulated guidelines and rules.

The doubters have questioned the safety of the three genes called **Barnase, Barstar and Bar** that are used to develop GM mustard. Extensive studies on GM mustard lines have established their safety.

The final allegation levelled against DMH-11 is that it will promote **use of herbicides**. The Bar gene does confer resistance to the **herbicide glufosinate**. But the gene has been used as a selectable marker in tissue culture during the breeding process.

The **herbicide-tolerance trait** in both the **Barnase female and Barstar male lines** is to be exploited only for the production of hybrid seed and not in the **commercial cultivation** of hybrids. The GEAC has also approved herbicide use only for hybrid seed production.

GM crops are today grown in over 30 countries. **Adoption rates** of GM traits have been more than 95% in some cases with no evidence of adverse effects.

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81. [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 **26th 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.

82. [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**.

83. [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.

84. [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.

85. 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.

86. [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.

87. 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](#)

88. [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 **28th 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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89. [Input cost pressure – on increasing milk prices](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “Input cost pressure” published in Business Standard on 28th 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.

90. [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 29th 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.

91. 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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92. [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**.

93. [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.

94. [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.

95. [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.

96. [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 **30th 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.

97. [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 **30th 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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98. [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**.