



9 PM

Compilation

6th to 11th February 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. [Our growth needs deep analysis more than constant trumpeting](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Our growth needs deep analysis more than constant trumpeting**” published in the **mint** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Indian economy and growth

Relevance– Growth trends of Indian economy

News– A close look at trends of economy in global comparison raises some questions

Why is there confusion about India’s growth numbers?

There is controversy over the revised series at **2011-12 prices**. There is a widely held view that GDP numbers in the revised series are overestimated.

The data from the **informal sector** accounts for a larger share of Indian GDP is available only with a time lag. Consequently, trends from the formal sector are projected into the informal sector while making provisional GDP estimates. These are subsequently revised once data from the informal sector is available.

The public debates in India revolve around **headline figures of CSO**. The international practice in analysing growth data is to look at **output loss/gain relative to trend growth rate**.

What can be analysed from comparison of average growth rate of 2014-22 of India with other Asian economies?

The **fastest growing economy** over the past seven years was neither China nor India. It was Bangladesh.

Global attention is focussed on China deceleration due to **Xi Jinping policies**. He privileges security over economic growth. However, growth deceleration over this period is more for India as compared to China.

There is talk of an **economic crisis in Pakistan**. However, its average growth rate during the past four years was more than India.

During this period, Bangladesh overtook India in per capita income. India’s neighbours to the east and west had **better average economic growth** over the last four years.

Output loss of 18.2% of GDP over the last four years in India is very high. This is a substantial loss. It is significantly higher than China and other South Asian neighbours.

What needs to be done by economic policymakers?

There is a need for assessment of **large output loss**.

Corrections are required in the **GDP numbers based on the 2011-12 series**.

There is a need to **assess the output loss** that can not be recovered.

Trends of downward shifts need to be studied. True extent of long term damage will be known once the data on the informal sector is finalised.

Steps needed to **reverse the growth trend** should be finalised.

2. [Cities would literally be much cooler with more trees around](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Cities would literally be much cooler with more trees around**”, published in Live Mint on 8th Feb 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 1 – Urbanisation and associated issues

Context: 2022 was Europe’s hottest summer on record. However, this summer could be even worse with the return of El Niño. Urban areas are likely to be much more affected in this scenario. Due to urban heat islands (UHIs) affect, urban areas are 1.5° Celsius warmer than surrounding areas.

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Building materials (concrete, asphalt, metal) and machinery (cars, trucks, air-conditioners) absorb and produce heat, turning city blocks into baking ovens.

What are the other factors that make cities unhealthy place to live?

4.3% of premature deaths in cities during the summer months are attributable to UHIs.

Outdoor air pollution kills more than 4 million people a year.

Noise causes the loss of more than 1.8 million healthy life years in Europe.

What are the options available to make urban areas more liveable?

Encouraging denser living could be a key part of the race to net zero carbon emissions.

Increasing tree canopy cover in urban areas could reduce premature summer deaths in cities.

Equitable distribution of trees throughout the city.

Reflective roofs or whiter-than-white paint.

Urban green spaces are also associated with a lower prevalence of diabetes, heart problems, better birth outcomes and improved cognitive functioning.

What are the challenges to urban forestry?

After buying and planting, new trees require maintenance because like human trees can't survive in urban areas without much care.

[3. India's population gap over China to widen further, shows data](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's population gap over China to widen further, shows data**” published in the **Business Standard** on **11th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Population and associated issues

Relevance– Statistics and indicators related to population

News– India is expected to cross China and become the world's most populous country in April this year.

What are population projections for India and China?

According to **United Nations Population Division data**, India will surpass China in 2023 by **3 million people** and the gap will only widen with time.

The two countries have accounted for **around 36% of the world's population** since the 1950s.

In 2022, it was 35.6% and is estimated to be **35.5% in 2023**. By 2100, India and China will account for **22.2% of the world's population**.

What does the statistics say about the demographic dividend in India?

According to an analysis by **Pew Research Center**, roughly one-in-five people globally who are under the age of 25 live in India.

Those **below 25 years** of age accounted for **57.13% share** in India's total population in 1950. By **July 2023**, it will be **42.7%**.

The share of those in the **age group of 25-64** will be **50.2% by July 2023**. However, the share is projected to change by 2100. Share of those below 25 years of age will further decline to 23.9%.

The share of those in the age group of 25-64 will rise to 46.3%.

What does the statistics say about fertility rate in India?

India's **total fertility rate (TFR)** was **5.73** compared to a global rate of 4.86 in 1950.

In 2022, India's rate was **estimated to be 2.01** while the global rate is 2.31. China's TFR declined from 5.81 in 1950 to 1.18 in 2022.

Data from the **National Family Health Survey** shows that the fertility rate in urban India has fallen from 2.06 in 2005-06 to 1.63 in 2019-21. The decline in rural India was from 2.98 to 2.14 in the same period.

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What does the statistics say about migration in India?

In 2022, more than 487,000 people migrated from India. As per the **UN projections**, the country is likely to face **net negative migration till 2100**.

Pew Research Center highlights that India's net migration has not always been negative. In 2016, India gained an estimated 68,000 people due to migration.

India also **recorded increases in net migration** on several occasions in the second half of the 20th century.

4. [India's urban centres are ailing due to lack of funds](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's urban centres are ailing due to lack of funds**” published in **The Indian Express** on **11th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Urbanisation. GS2- Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels

Relevance– Urban financing

News– The health of municipal finances in India is in poor state. Revenue losses after GST implementation and the pandemic has further deteriorated it.

What is the scenario of urban financing in India?

As per the RBI, in FY21, at least 141 municipal corporations saw a **sharp decline in revenue**. Revenue shortfall greater than 25%.

There was a **significant increase in expenditure** of over 75%.

There was a **decline in projected growth in property tax** by approximately 11%, and **municipal fees** by 50%.

Raising municipal revenue is a challenge. **Studies by the Indian Institute for Human Settlements** have highlighted that urban local bodies' own revenue was only 47% of their total revenue. Property tax accounts for approximately 29% of it.

Most ULBs were dependent on **transfers from the Centre and state governments**.

The urban financing challenge is huge. **A World Bank estimate** suggests that India will need to invest **approximately \$840 billion in urban infrastructure** over the next 15 years.

What are the impacts of lack of urban financing?

This has led to **cuts in essential services**. Sewerage services have been affected by 55-71% in most cases.

Delayed salary and pension disbursements, and the decline in general upkeep of such cities are other fallouts.

What is the way forward for urban financing in India?

We need a multi-pronged strategy to bridge the gap.

Many urban local bodies and municipal corporations need a **fiscal stimulus**. **Disbursal of external grants** from the state and Centre is a concern.

In September 2020, the **CAG's performance audit** highlighted a saving of over Rs 5,000 crore due to **non-disbursal of grants** in Karnataka. The urban local bodies in Karnataka had delayed disbursements.

This needs to change. States and the Centre must ensure that disbursements are made on time.

Additional funding needs to be explored. **A revolving fund**, which offers **budgetary stabilisation measures** can be considered. Along with it, the provision of an **overdraft facility** when revenues and fiscal transfers are delayed can be considered.

Green bonds need to be promoted, along with a joint corpus fund, funded by the Centre and states.

Property taxes also need **rationalisation**. It can be improved by **updating existing databases, reassessing properties** using digital tools and **imposing taxes** on non-compliers and defaulters.

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Concessions will need to be **rationalised**. State and local bodies should be incentivised to move away from **fiscally ruinous measures**.

Expenditure efficiency needs to be boosted by pushing for outsourcing of services and exploring PPP models, and participatory budgeting.

The Centre can **expand incentives** given to states under **interest-free capex loans** to cover aspects of urban development like **framing building bylaws, pushing for public transport and pursuing mixed housing schemes**.

Innovative financing mechanisms can be pursued. These include **asset monetisation, financing from carbon credit generation**.

Civic action will be required. There should be a push for **user charges for public service delivery**. For capital expenditure needs, levies like **betterment fees, impact fees and tax increment financing** should be explored.

General Studies Paper – 2

General Studies - 2

1. [The discrepancies in the latest AISHE report](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The discrepancies in the latest AISHE report**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th February 2023**.

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

Relevance– Statistics about higher education in India

News– The All-India Survey on Higher Education 2020-21 report was released recently.

What is the basic difference of the current report with previous reports?

It had revised the **Gross Enrolment Ratio** in higher education retrospectively for the previous four years, by recalculating it based on **population projections as per the 2011 Census**. Previous reports had used projections based on the 2001 Census.

What are the discrepancies in the latest AISHE report?

A comparison of the **population projections** used in the AISHE 2020-21 report with the **Census of India Report** released in July 2020, shows variations.

There are sharp deviations in Tamil Nadu’s population projection used in the **AISHE 2020-21 report** between 2016 and 2020 and the population projection based on the **CoI report**.

The figures based on the **CoI report** show a gradual decline between 2016 and 2020. **AISHE 2020-21** shows an increase for the first four years and a sharp drop in 2020.

In Himachal Pradesh, the projected population in the 18-23 age group for 2019 was revised upwards by 6% in the **AISHE 2020-21 report compared to the AISHE 2019-20 report**. However, the **State’s GER** for 2019 remained the same in both the reports.

2. [Spy In The Sky – China’s espionage balloons or espionage ships are part of an aggressive strategy that can target India too](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Spy In The Sky – China’s espionage balloons or espionage ships are part of an aggressive strategy that can target India too**” published in **The Times of India** on **6th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Chinese espionage capabilities.

News: Recently, the US forces shot down a Chinese spy balloon off the US coast. There are reports that a second spy balloon is already flying over Central and South America. This has strained relations between the US and China and has larger implications for India-China relations.

Why Chinese espionage capabilities is a cause of worry for Global nations, particularly India?

a) The recent one wasn’t the first Chinese surveillance balloon to be detected but was the most sophisticated one. Hence, Chinese spy tech is getting increasingly sophisticated.

b) Last year’s docking of a Chinese spy ship masquerading as a research vessel at Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port was another example of Beijing’s growing espionage capabilities.

c) Chinese definitions of government and civilian assets are superficial. For instance, the Chinese mentioned the balloon as a weather-monitoring device and the 2020 investigation revealed a Chinese technology firm was harvesting data on more than 10,000 influential individuals in India.

What should be done to address Chinese espionage capabilities?

a) All cooperation with Chinese civilian agencies and businesses needs to be seen with the security of the state, b) India needs to upgrade its hi-tech counter-espionage measures, and c)

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the Indian government is in urgent need to step up counter-intelligence cooperation with the US and other likeminded democracies to counter China's plans.

3. [The freedom of speech and an 'adolescent India'](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The freedom of speech and an 'adolescent India'**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Significant provisions of constitution

Relevance– Right to freedom in India

News– The article explains the notions of freedom of speech in India and the west. It also explains the evolution of this freedom in India.

What is the notion of freedom of speech in India?

The freedom of speech is one of the most cherished freedoms. The Constitution of India provides this freedom. But, it is subjected to the **interest of public order, the sovereignty and integrity of India**.

The concept of freedom of speech is a **western notion**. While some form of freedom may have existed in ancient Greece. The real freedom of speech was propounded by **Voltaire and Rousseau**.

B.R. Ambedkar says freedom of speech exists only for those who are in favour of the **social order**.

The freedom is not the **freedom of liberalism** which was expressed by Voltaire.

There is some evidence that the freedom of expression existed within **state-defined boundaries**.

The content of the debates of **Adi Shankara or Saint Thirugnana Sambandar** seem remarkably liberal. Yet, this freedom did not extend to criticism of the king or his royal policies.

What is western thought on freedom of speech?

Full freedom of thought and expression has emerged from the West.

The freedom of speech and thought in the west was the **freedom from limits set by the state**.

Bertrand Russell traces the history of free thought to its culmination.

A man's right to think freely supersedes his duty of **obedience to the state**. The right to not just think freely but also to criticise the state is very fundamental to **western notions of democracy**.

How freedom of speech has evolved in India after independence?

The first 50 years of freedom were spent in framing the contours of this freedom. This freedom was created through a **series of judicial decisions**.

These decisions have recognised freedom in a restricted form, defining more by exception than by rule.

The 1990s and 2000s brought **unprecedented economic progress**. It has led to a strong opposition to free thought.

The **muzzling of unpopular opinions** is now done through **mob power, actions for defamation, social media blackouts**. Calls for bans and boycotts of films and books are done for the silliest of reasons.

Persons perceive insults and commence protests and lawsuits. Banners in film theatres are burnt, art studios are vandalised and the staging of plays are stopped.

For the first time, freedom of speech is under threat **not only vertically but also horizontally**.

What is the reason for the present popular opinion on freedom of speech?

Indians oppose the opinions and expressions of others when they feel threatened by it. This **sense of insecurity** along with aggression runs as a common thread through all the oppressive actions.

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We seek strength in numbers. The mob provides us the **comfort and the anonymity to suppress opinions and views** that we disagree with. Once all dissenting thoughts are suppressed, we will find only views that belong to us.

What is the way forward to enjoy real freedom of speech?

The Supreme Court of India in its judgement in **Kaushal Kishore's case** declared that the fundamental rights of Indians are exercisable **not only vertically but also horizontally**. Fundamental rights can be enforced even against persons other than the state and its instrumentalities.

This judgement shows the way how India can emerge from this stage.

If every citizen **enforces their fundamental freedoms** not only against the state but against each other, they can seize back the power to define our own freedoms.

4. [CEO NITI Aayog Param Iyer on Budget 2023-24: An infrastructure push for the people](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“CEO NITI Aayog Param Iyer on Budget 2023-24: An infrastructure push for the people”** published in **The Indian Express** on **7th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2-Budgeting

Relevance: Infrastructure creation

News- The article explains how Budget 2023 gives a powerful thrust to infrastructure development .

What are the announcements in Budget related to infrastructure?

In Budget 2023-24, **3.3 per cent of the GDP**, an increase of three times from 2019, was allocated for infrastructure.

The **Ministry of Railways** received its **highest-ever allocation** of Rs 2.4 lakh crore, approximately nine times the allocation in 2013-14.

The **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** saw a **36 per cent increase** in its budget to about Rs 2.7 lakh crore.

The direct capital investment by the Centre has been further supplemented by a **one-year extension of the 50-year interest-free loan** to state governments.

It is apt that the Finance Minister has observed that every rupee spent on infrastructure and capital expenditure gives 2.95 as a multiplier.

How is the Budget pushing the digital transformation?

The **first phase** of digital transformation started in 2015 and was led by the **JAM trinity** — Jan Dhan, [Aadhaar](#) and mobile linkages, and the Digital India programme.

The **second phase** of digital transformation is now being led by the development, application, and large-scale expansion of cutting-edge technologies.

Another important domain that the government is focusing on currently is **creating open AI resources**. The **Digital India Bhashini portal** is a public digital platform that hosts 260 open-source API-based AI models .

Similarly, the **Agriculture Accelerator Fund** announced in the budget will enable the Indian agricultural ecosystem to work collaboratively and find knowledge-based and farmer-centric solutions.

How is the Budget pushing the Social infrastructure?

The total expenditure of the central government in social infrastructure has **increased by 134 per cent** from Rs 9.1 lakh crore in 2016 to 21.3 lakh crore in 2023.

The **Aspirational Districts Programme** spearheaded by NITI Aayog through data-driven governance has resulted in consistent macro improvements in key socioeconomic indicators.

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The emphasis on **digital land records under the SVAMITVA Scheme** of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is a structural reform in rural land management that leads to individual economic empowerment.

Targeted initiatives announced in the budget such as the **mission to eliminate sickle cell anaemia** will raise awareness about the near-fatal disease and will immensely benefit the affected tribal areas.

What is the way forward?

This concerted thrust on creation, maintenance and expansion of physical, digital and social infrastructure has emerged as a systemic focus of India's unique development model.

This infrastructure triad will be the enabler of growth and leveller of opportunities.

5. [Budget 2023-24 ignores rural distress, tries to fix demand problem with supply interventions](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Budget 2023-24 ignores rural distress, tries to fix demand problem with supply interventions”** published in **The Indian Express** on **7th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Budgeting

Relevance: Rural development

News- The article emphasises the need to prioritise allocations towards reviving consumption demand and spurring private investment .

What are the challenges before the economy?

Per capita incomes in real terms in 2021-22 are still below the 2018-19 levels and the overall growth between 2016-17 and 2021-22 is at its lowest level of 3.7 per cent for any five-year period in the last four decades.

Covid only exacerbated the already fragile economic situation. The most important of these is the **decline in demand**, both for consumption and investment.

The distress is far more serious in rural areas. **Rural wages have stagnated** for almost a decade now. Farmers' incomes have either declined or, at best, stagnated in the last five years.

How has the budget ignored rural distress?

In real terms, the **budget has declined by 10 per cent** at a time when the agricultural sector is going through its worst crisis.

The **rise in input costs** for both energy and fertilisers is likely to get worse with the **withdrawal of the fertiliser subsidy**.

Even the nominal cash transfer that was provided as part of the PM-Kisan has seen a decline in allocation.

Public investment in agriculture declined by 0.6 per cent per annum between 2016-17 and 2020-21, the last year for which data is available.

The budget for the Ministry of Rural Development is **13 per cent lower** than the revised expenditure last year .

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (**MGNREGA**) **has seen its budget decline** to Rs 60,000 crore as against Rs 89,400 crore in the revised estimates for 2022-23.

With spiraling [inflation](#) and even the cushion of free food grains having been withdrawn, rural areas are likely to face an uncertain situation.

What are the other issues involved with this budget?

The government's preference **supply-side interventions** even when there is excess capacity in a demand-constrained economy.

It is reflected in an **almost one-third increase in allocation for investment**.

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Given the **small share of public investment**, it is unlikely to be sufficient unless it is accompanied by the private sector increasing its investment.

This will have a **negligible impact on employment and domestic demand** given the low employment elasticity of these investments.

6. [Instead of criminalising child marriage, Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma should heed PM Modi's call of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Instead of criminalising child marriage, Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma should heed PM Modi's call of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice

Relevance: evolution of laws on child marriages in India

News: The Assam government has taken steps to crackdown child marriages and arrest those responsible. This brings us to the situation of child marriage prevailing in India.

What are the highlights of the data?

UN estimates suggest that 1.5 million girls get married before they turn 18 and about 16 percent of girls in the age group of 15-19 are married at present.

According to the 2011 census, 44 percent of women in Assam were married before the age of 18. The figures for Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh were 47 percent, 46 percent and 43 percent, respectively.

What are the problems with child marriages?

Child marriages **affect the national economy negatively** and do not allow people to come out of the vicious cycle of inter-generational poverty.

Child marriage deprives women of education and life skills. Early pregnancies adversely **affect the physical and mental health of young mothers**.

However, prohibiting child marriages by adopting the measures of the Assam government is also not favourable.

How has the prohibition on child marriages in India changed over the time?

Religious Personal Laws: Hindu and Muslim Personal Laws do not explicitly prohibit child marriage.

The Rig Veda mentions *garbhadhan* which means attaining the wealth of the womb. It is the first of the 16 *samskaras* a Hindu is expected to perform.

Account of Foreign Travellers: Megasthenes has written that the women of the Pandian kingdom bear children at six years of age. **Al Biruni** also wrote that child marriages were rampant in India.

Colonial Period: The **Age of Consent Acts of 1861 and 1891** brought in reform in conjugal rights. The **1861 Act laid down 10 years as the minimum age** for sexual intercourse. However, it was opposed and was asked to raise the age of marriage to 12 because it violated norms related to *garbhadhan*.

Therefore, **the 1891 Act raised the age of consent for sexual intercourse to 12**. However, it was also opposed by the people of that time and was thought as interference in Hindu society.

Further, in **1927 the Child Marriage Restraint Act** was introduced in the Legislative Council of India. It raised the age of marriage to 14 for girls and 18 for boys.

After Independence: The marriageable age for girls was raised to 15 in 1949 and 18 in 1978.

Further, in several cases like *P Venkataramana (1977)*, *Rabindra (1986)*, *G Saravanan (2017)*,

High courts have ruled that child marriages are neither void nor voidable but valid.

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In 2021, the Punjab and Haryana High Court held a Muslim girl's marriage after attaining puberty as valid.

In the **Hadiya case (2018)**, the Supreme Court mentioned attainment of puberty, and not 18 years, as the minimum age of marriage, as one of the conditions for a valid Muslim marriage.

The **Law Commission in its 205th Report (2008)** has suggested **that poverty, indebtedness and dowry** are the main reasons behind the child marriages.

Therefore, even the courts have different views about child marriages. Hence, a proper solution is needed to it.

What can be the way ahead?

The government's **investment in adolescent girls, public awareness and growth in women's education** in the period between 2000-2010 brought down the percentage of child marriages from 47 percent to 30 percent.

Therefore, **the Assam government should also opt for these measures** instead of arresting and taking coercive measures. It should attempt the visionary and practical solution of the campaign **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao**.

7. [Municipal Mess – From MCD to BMC, paralysis of urban local bodies undermines local governance and democracy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Municipal Mess – From MCD to BMC, paralysis of urban local bodies undermines local governance and democracy**” published in **The Times of India** on **7th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About MCD mayor elections.

News: Recently, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) failed to elect its mayor for the third time in a month.

What are the reasons and impact of the delay in the MCD mayor elections?

Given Delhi's unique governance structure with a multiplicity of authorities, ideally, the state and central governments should be working in harmony. But hyper-competitive politics is hampering the functions of MCD.

In the absence of a mayor, major decisions related to policy matters, development works and projects will get delayed.

What is the status of other municipal corporations?

For close to a year, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) – the country's richest civic body – has been managed by an administrator after its term expired and polls were delayed.

Further, 22 of 28 municipal corporations in Maharashtra have seen their terms expire without any fresh polls.

What is the performance of Municipalities?

The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 provided for the creation of urban local bodies and empowered state governments to devolve the responsibility of 18 functions including urban planning, regulation of land use, water supply etc.

A 2020 paper by PRS Legislative Research found that most state governments are reluctant to share power and taxes with local bodies.

675 million Indians are slated to live in urban centres by 2035, hence India needs smarter cities with proper urban governance instead of stalled local bodies.

8. [The demand for MGNREGS work is unmet](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The demand for MGNREGS work is unmet**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the demand for MGNREGS.

News: The allocation for MGNREGA in the Budget is ₹60,000 crore. This is less than 0.2% of the GDP, the lowest ever allocation as a percentage of GDP. World Bank economists had estimated that the allocation should be 1.6% of the GDP.

What is Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)?

Read here: [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme \(MGNREGS\)](#)

What is the rationale behind the reduction in funds for MGNREGA?

Read here: [What could be the govt's calculations behind the slashing of the MGNREGA budget and Cut in MGNREGS outlay is not a concern: Somanathan](#)

What are the challenges in meeting the demand for MGNREGS?

MGNREGA is a demand-driven law. Every household must get work within 15 days of demanding work, failing which the workers are legally entitled to an unemployment allowance. But the demand-driven aspect is not functioning well at present.

For instance, Two crore new job cards were issued between 2019-20 and 2022-23 showing the continued demand. But the average number of days of employment continues to be around 45 days highlighting the demand suppression.

Management Information System (MIS) used in MGNREGA has been used to subvert the Act in many ways. Such as **a)** The aggregated person-days of work demanded at the State and national level is not available as a national MIS report, **b)** National MIS reports also grossly underestimate the unmet demand. A private study conducted in four States highlights that 39% of the households did not get a single day of work despite wanting 77 days on average. On the other hand, national MIS reports shows that almost all the households that demanded work were offered work.

Hence the Rural Development Ministry claims that low demand has resulted in Budget cuts, but the reality is opposite.

What are the challenges associated with the inadequate allocation of funds and the demand for MGNREGS?

Inadequate allocations led to **a)** A steady centralisation of the programme architecture even as wages for most States remain lower than minimum agricultural wages, **b)** wage payment delays in many areas, **c)** a rise in unmet demands for the scheme, **d)** Officials might give fewer days of work to many households or provide many days of work to a few households and **e)** Officials might not even register work demand on the MIS owing to inadequate funds.

Over all, budget cuts have created a vicious cycle of demand suppression, wage payment delays, overburdened field staff and corruption. These further discourage workers from doing MGNREGA work.

What should be done to meet the demand for MGNREGS?

The person-days of work demanded must be made readily available for each State for that the government should address the real problem of underfunding and excessive centralisation.

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9. [End-of-life decisions – SC’s tweaks on directive norms are welcome, but legislation will be better](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**End-of-life decisions – SC’s tweaks on directive norms are welcome, but legislation will be better**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About advance medical directives.

News: In a recent order, a Constitution Bench modified the rules regarding ‘advance medical directives’. This is due to “insurmountable obstacles” attached to the previous rules.

What are the recent changes in ‘advance medical directives’?

Read here: [Supreme Court eases procedures for terminally ill patients to withdraw medical treatment](#)

What is euthanasia?

Read here: [The Debate on Euthanasia – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the challenges associated with the recent changes in ‘advance medical directives’?

-The onus is now on the persons themselves to hand over a copy of the advance directive to the guardians or close relatives named in it, as well as to the family physician.

-The new guidelines require the hospital itself to constitute both the primary and secondary medical boards. From now on, the district Collector need not constitute the second medical board. However, in both rules, the patient is not in a position to make any decision at this phase.

What should be done to make ‘advance medical directives’ inclusive?

While guidelines are useful and necessary to implement the concept of a ‘living will’ and advance medical directives, it is time Parliament came out with a comprehensive law with a repository of advance directives.

10. [In light of the Russia-Ukraine war, an opportunity to modernise India’s defence industry](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**In light of the Russia-Ukraine war, an opportunity to modernise India’s defence industry**” published in **The Indian Express** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International Relations

Relevance– Changing geopolitics and defence ecosystem

News– New global defence engagements are emerging with the Ukraine war. It opens the possibility of modernising its defence industrial base for India

What are new geopolitical dynamics emerging in the context of the Ukraine war?

Asia is no longer a **passive theatre for rivalry** among the Western powers. Asian powers are contributing to **European security**. NATO is **stepping up its engagement** with Asian powers. Pakistan is transferring ammunition to Ukraine as part of a major **diplomatic effort to reset relations with the US**. The current government is trying to correct that tilt towards the Sino-Russian alliance by the former PM.

North Korea has joined the party on the other side. Russia has turned to North Korea for the supply of winter clothing and ammunition. Iran has become a major supplier of drones to Russia. Turkey has supplied drones and more to Ukraine over the last year. It has also been in the lead in creating **diplomatic engagement** between Ukraine and Russia.

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South Korea has emerged as a major supplier of arms to Europe. South Korea and Japan are not only **bringing NATO into Asia**, but also taking **Asia to NATO's frontlines with Russia**.

The idea that Europe and Asia are **separate strategic theatres** is becoming difficult to sustain. **China's alliance "without limits"** unveiled last year with Russia has broken it.

The US has responded by promoting **greater cooperation between NATO and America's Asian allies**. **NATO's Madrid summit** last June saw the participation for the first time of Asian leaders from Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea.

How is the global defence ecosystem changing?

Korean arms sales to Europe are surging. Poland alone is expected to buy nearly \$16 billion worth of arms from South Korea. Norway and Estonia are among other European states looking for Korean arms to cope with the perceived security threats from Russia.

Moscow's neighbours to the West are also arming themselves with new weapons due to fear of **Russian expansionism**. The Western and Russian arms industries are not able to meet the massive demand.

The arms bazaar is no longer **exclusively Western**. Asian powers are now **important producers and traders** of weapons.

China is the **fourth largest arms exporter** in the world after the US, Russia, and France. Most of China's arms exports are to the developing world.

Korea arms exports reached nearly \$20 billion last year. It is now **ranked eighth** on the list of arms exporters. The capacity to deliver **high-quality weapons at low cost and on short order** has put Korea in a pivotal position.

Russia's war in Ukraine has also woken up Japan to **rethink its security policies**. Japan's recent national defence policy has led to selling arms to friends and partners. It has provided some **non-lethal military assistance** to Ukraine.

It plans to **double defence spending** over the next five years. Japan is also tying up with European and American arms companies to develop fighter aircraft, missiles and drones for domestic use as well as exports.

What is the case of India?

India wants to be an **exporter of arms**. The **export of Brahmos** to the Philippines last year has been a major milestone in the country's evolution as an arms producer.

The largest destination for Indian arms exports is not the developing world, but the US. That has largely come from the Indian **supply sub-assemblies to US weapons systems**.

India is facing competition from the **better-organised and more developed** South Korean manufacturers.

What is the way forward for the defence ecosystem in India?

For India, the **new and dynamic defence engagement** between Europe and Asia opens up multiple opportunities. This includes the possibilities for **modernising its defence industrial base** in partnership with friendly states.

India's recent agreement with the US on expanding **joint defence production and technology** should be a precursor to agreements with its partners to enhance its arms exports.

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11. [Neglecting the health sector has consequences](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Neglecting the health sector has consequences**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues relating to development and management of health and education

Relevance– Social sector

News– The allocations in the Budget for health, education and nutrition has remained stagnant.

What is the importance of health and education?

For **sustainable, long-term growth** of the country, expanding **universal access** to high quality education, healthcare and nutrition is imperative.

No country can go far if a significant proportion of its population is **illiterate, unhealthy or malnourished**. All the countries that are developed today invested well in education, health and nutrition.

Studies in the U.S. show that after the **Reagan era, innovation and scientific capability** were impacted when **public investment in education** was reduced to push privatisation.

What is the status of the social sector in India?

A study showed that **230 million Indians** slid into poverty due to COVID-19. The **ASER report** shows the abysmal state of education. Many Class 5 students are unable to read a Class 2 textbook.

NFHS-5 data show that among children aged below five years, 35.5% were **stunted** and 32.1% were **underweight**.

Disease burden is rising with **non-communicable diseases, mental health and geriatric care** adding to the load of communicable diseases.

India lacks **adequate human resources, infrastructure and access to affordable diagnosis and treatment**.

What are indications from the budget for the health sector?

Budget is **disappointing** in the case of the health and education sector.

The allocations for education and nutrition are stagnant. The budget for midday meals was reduced by 9%.

The budget provides allocation for free foodgrains to 80 crore poor and other welfare provisions. But these are **partial gains**. They don't address the **widening inequalities**.

What were the lessons learnt from COVID19 in case of the health sector?

There is a lack of **financial risk protection**. This leads to citizens incurring huge expenses, estimated to be more than ₹70,000 crore.

A **broken down primary health system**, particularly in the north resulted in a large number of avoidable deaths.

There is absence of **well-equipped and functioning district hospitals** to cope with demand. India needs an infusion of resources and a bold imagination to address these.

It also showed us the **poor state of the regulatory framework**. Many laws have serious infirmities and embed conflicts of interest. Some need to be scrapped and some amended.

COVID-19 also underscored the need to **invest in public health** to build our **disease surveillance system** and **strengthen resilience** to such shocks.

What is the way forward for better healthcare provisioning in India?

Addressing **flaws in the healthcare sector** is urgent because there is no guarantee that the worst is over.

It is the **responsibility of a government** to protect its citizens against any such eventuality by **improving the healthcare system and reducing vulnerability**.

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We need **political leadership backed by adequate funding** to rebuild our public health system, promote scientific research, and expand health security.

Equity and justice are values that must be guiding factors. Measuring policy and money allocation in terms of political benefits is **short-term and unsustainable**. When such **structures collapse**, the poor and marginalised suffer disproportionately.

12. [A quick reset – India and Canada are looking at the big picture as they put behind discord](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“A quick reset – India and Canada are looking at the big picture as they put behind discord”** published in **The Hindu** on **8th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About bilateral ties between India and Canada.

News: Recently, the Canadian Foreign Minister visited India for bilateral talks. With the upcoming G-20 summit in India, the visit of the Canadian Prime Minister for the summit will be key for India – Canada relations.

What are the key discussions on bilateral ties between India and Canada?

Read here: [India, Canada FMs discuss Indo-Pacific cooperation, trade](#)

What are the importance of India for Canada and vice versa?

Canada was among the first countries associated with India’s nuclear programme. Both countries have an agreement on civil nuclear cooperation.

Canada’s deteriorating ties with China: Canada in its **new Indo-Pacific Strategy** marked out China as an “increasingly disruptive global power” and mentioned India as a “critical partner” with shared traditions of democracy and pluralism.

Canada’s search for new markets to diversify its considerable economic engagement with China coincides with **India’s push to conclude free trade agreements** with many countries.

India also has a massive diaspora population and student links in Canada.

Note: *Both India and Canada are already working on an “Early Progress Trade Agreement” and planned to finalise a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.*

What are the challenges in developing bilateral ties between India and Canada?

a) India has continued to express concerns over the **resurgence of Khalistani separatism**, **b)** Canadian pronouncements on developments in India, including on rights and freedoms is always a cause of concern. For instance, the Canadian PM’s comment on farmers’ agitation in 2020-21 led to the cancellation of diplomatic activity for a while.

Overall, bilateral ties between India and Canada can bring strategic and economic gains but for achieving that both nations should side-step the political pitfalls.

13. [The lesson from a court appointment drama](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“The lesson from a court appointment drama”** published in **The Hindu** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Structure and organisation of judiciary

Relevance– Issues related to appointment of judges

News– Differences are emerging between higher judiciary and the political executive over the power to appoint judges to the judges of higher courts.

What is the recent controversy related to judicial appointments?

The appointment of L. Victoria Gowri to the Madras High Court has created controversy. She is alleged to be engaged in **hate speech** against Muslims and Christians.

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A petition was filed in SC on this matter. The legal challenge to her appointment was rejected by the court.

What are structural problems with the process of judicial appointments?

The first problem is **opacity**. In other countries, the names of the judicial candidates are **publicly known** before the formal commencement of the selection process.

In such a scenario, facts, such as Ms. Victoria Gowri's statements would come to light. They would be **known to the selection bodies**.

In India, the candidate's name is effectively made public after their selection by the collegium. The selection process is **behind closed doors**. The parties involved are the collegium and the government.

This has an **effect on transparency**. The government can simply **withhold relevant information** from the collegium. This can create a situation like the present one.

What are issues related to judicial review of appointments of judges?

Once a collegium recommendation has been made, the only way of contesting it is through a **legal challenge** before the Supreme Court. It leads to a set of **awkward situations**.

The **decision of the collegium** must be challenged before their own junior colleagues. These colleagues will be assigned the case by the CJI.

The judges insisted that the only question they could consider in judicial review was L. Victoria Gowri's **eligibility and not suitability**.

It is problematic due to **structural opacity** of the collegium. It benefits the political executive. The government can influence the materials on the basis of which the **collegium determines "suitability"**.

What is the way forward to improve the appointment process?

In South Africa, the **judicial appointments commission** are subjected to **judicial review**. The courts have directed the commission to make their deliberations public.

There is a need for a degree **of separation** between the judicial appointments commission and the court. This will create a **system of checks and balances, and a corrective mechanism** in case of mistakes and errors.

There is an appointment process that genuinely safeguards **judicial independence from executive dominance**.

14. [The fine print in the Indo-US pact, iCET](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"The fine print in the Indo-US pact, iCET"** published in the **Indian Express** on **9th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET).

News: Recently, India's National Security Advisor held talks with the US counterpart on the first dialogue on the Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) in the US.

What is the Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET)?

Read here: [Inaugural iCET dialogue will accelerate US' strategic technology partnership with India: US NSA](#)

About Indo-US "strategic partnership" in the past

Both countries signed **a)** "Next Steps in Strategic Partnership" in 2004; **b)** "Defence Framework Agreement" in 2005, **c)** "Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement" in 2008 and **d)** all four key "foundational agreements".

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Both nations also launched the “Defence Technology and Trade Initiative” in 2012. The US accorded “Major Defence Partner” status to India in 2016, c) “2+2 dialogue” in 2018.

All of Indo-US “strategic partnership” has delivered \$22 billion worth of military hardware purchases by India via the foreign military sales programme.

What are the advantages of iCET?

iCET could **1)** Be a “game changer” in catalysing Indo-US technology cooperation by persuading the US to lift existing export control restrictions, **2)** Encourage the private sector of both countries to cooperate in sensitive sectors, **3)** Demonstrate a mutual commitment to investing in advanced technologies, such as quantum computing, AI and space, as well as the critical field of semiconductor design and manufacture.

What are the challenges faced by India’s defence sector?

India’s massive defence industrial complex, including the DRDO, defence public sector undertakings (DPSU) and the (erstwhile) Ordnance Factory Board, are **associated with closely the Soviet/Russian arms** industry.

India’s previous transfer of technology (ToT) resulted in engineers and designers acquiring only the “knowhow” of methods and procedures required for assembling or building aircraft, aero engines and armoured vehicles from parts or material supplied. Hence, the **principles and laws of defence equipments are not completely understood.**

What are the challenges faced by iCET?

-The US Arms Export Control Act not only requires clearances from the Departments of State and Defence for ToT but also imposes certain restrictions on the recipient state.

-The iCET aims to make the US a dominant player in India’s defence procurements by replacing Russia. But, this will face stiff resistance from Russia.

-While India is in dire need of technology, the US industry remains firmly focused on trade.

What India needs to do to make iCET comprehensive?

India need to leverage its considerable purchases in the arms, energy, civil aviation, nuclear and other sectors in a holistic manner to extract technology from the US.

Atmanirbharta must remain India’s ultimate aim. Hence, India should break free of Russia’s and US’s defence products and also regain “strategic autonomy” in international affairs.

15. Exploring the blue in the India-France partnership

Source– The post is based on the article “**Exploring the blue in the India-France partnership**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral grouping and agreements

Relevance– India and France bilateral relationship

News– India and France are celebrating 25 years of their strategic partnership.

What is the current status of the relationship between the two countries?

Strategic cooperation– **Strategic partnership** was signed in 1998. They have **shared values and aspirations of peace, stability**. Both have a desire for **strategic autonomy**.

There are **no real substantive disagreements** between the two nations.

There is a **high level India--France political dialogue** that is ongoing in **defence, maritime, counterterrorism and the Indo-Pacific**.

Trade and investment– France has emerged as a **key trading partner** of India. Annual trade was \$12.42 billion in 2021--22.

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It is the **11th largest foreign investor** in India with a cumulative investment of \$10.31 billion from April 2000 to June 2022. It represents 1.70% of the total **foreign direct investment** inflows into India.

Defence partnership– It has emerged as a **key defence partner** for India, becoming the second largest defence supplier in 2017--2021.

Key examples of defence cooperation are the induction of the **French Scorpene conventional submarines**, built under **technology transfer agreement of 2005**, and the **Rafale fighter jets**. The Tata group has also tied up with Airbus to manufacture **C-295 tactical transport aircraft** in Vadodara, Gujarat.

There is a **robust network of military dialogues**. They regularly held **joint exercises like Varuna, Garuda, and Shakti**.

Civil nuclear cooperation– France was among the first countries with which India signed a **civil nuclear deal**. It has also played a critical role in limiting India's isolation in the **non--proliferation order** after the 1998 nuclear tests.

France supports India's bid for **permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council as well as its entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group**.

Climate change– it is an area of importance for both. India has supported France in the **Paris Agreement** expressing its strong commitment towards mitigating climate change impact. Both countries launched the **International Solar Alliance** in 2015.

Cooperation in the Indian ocean– India and France are **resident powers** of the Indian Ocean and in the Indo -Pacific. Both have signed "**Joint Strategic Vision of India -France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region**" which presented a blueprint for a strengthening of ties. In operational terms, both do **joint patrolling** in the Indian Ocean.

Indo Pacific– Both countries have articulated their **common vision for a free, fair and open Indo -Pacific**. It seeks to provide comprehensive solutions for **maritime security, regional cooperation, and climate change adaptation**.

India and France in September 2022 agreed to set up an **Indo--Pacific Trilateral Development Cooperation Fund** that will support **sustainable innovative solutions** for countries in the region. The two partners have formed a **trilateral grouping with the United Arab Emirates** to ensure **maritime domain awareness and security** from the east coast of Africa to the far Pacific.

Global cooperation– While there are **divergences over the Ukraine crisis**, there is a broad understanding of each other's position. Both countries are working together to coordinate on playing a **constructive role** in the crisis.

Mr. Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are among the few world leaders who have maintained **open communication channels** with the Russian President and Ukraine's President.

Both countries share concerns over the **rise of China and its aggressive behaviour**.

Cooperation in emerging areas– They are looking for cooperation in issues such as **digitisation, cyber, green energy, a blue economy, ocean sciences, and space**.

16. About Child marriages: In Assam, The Answer Is Schools, Not Jails

Source: The post is based on the article "**In Assam, The Answer Is Schools, Not Jails**" published in **The Times of India** on **10th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About early child marriages.

News: Thousands are being arrested in Assam as part of a crackdown on child marriage.

Why arrest is not a correct solution for reducing early child marriages?

Studies from across the world and in India have shown that educational attainment and the socio-economic status of a household are the most significant correlates of child marriage. People, mostly the poorest, are being punished through the arrests, for the state’s failure to provide good quality schooling and health facilities and its inability to empower its women.

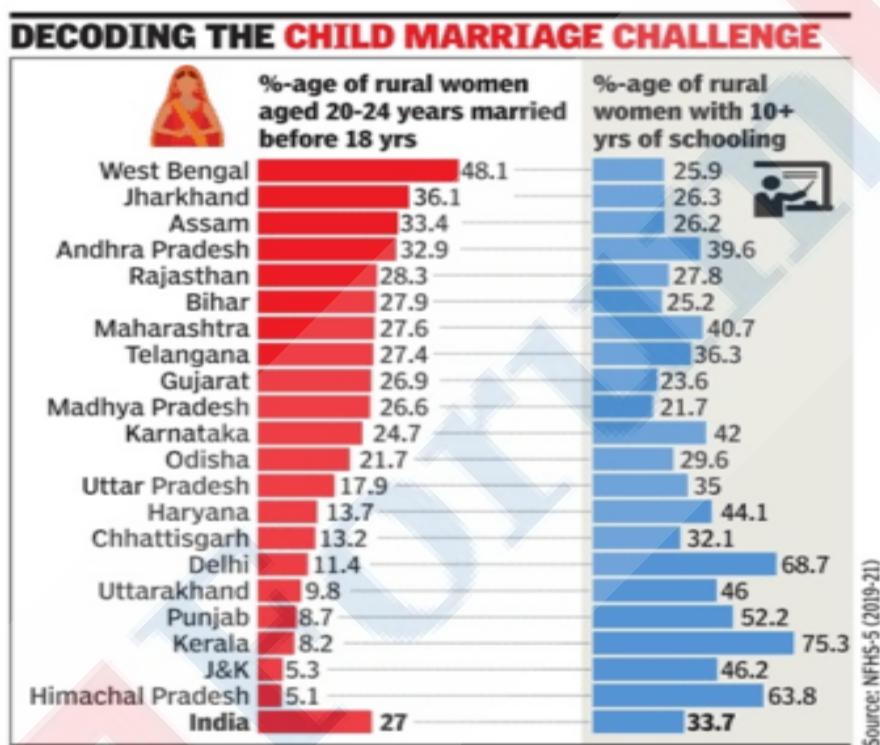
How educational backwardness in Assam led to early child marriages?

Almost 86% of Assam’s population is rural. The state also has among the largest proportion of rural women who haven’t completed 10 or more years of schooling, roughly 74%.

According to the latest National Family Health Survey (2019-21), about one-third of rural women in the 20-24 age group in Assam were married before the age of 18.

Based on the recommendations of Niti Aayog, the Assam government shut down 1,700 government-run elementary schools and merged them with neighbouring schools as a part of the school’s ‘rationalisation’ plan. Such mergers usually hurt girl students the most as they often have to travel long distances to go to school.

About child marriages in other states



Source: TOI

According to the UNICEF study on child marriages in India, “among individual characteristics, the level of education of females has the most profound impact on the age they marry, irrespective of household wealth, locality and other characteristics.”

Though a Muslim girl can marry on completing 15 years or when she attains puberty according to Muslim personal law – a provision being challenged before the Supreme Court – child marriage is not exclusive to the community. According to the 2011 Census, 84% of the 12 million children (7.8 million girls) who married before 10 years in India were Hindus and mostly from rural India. There are only two states – West Bengal (48%) and Jharkhand (36%) – with a higher proportion of rural women in the 20-24 age group who were married before 18. They also have roughly the

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same proportion of women who did not complete more than 10 years of schooling as Assam, about 74%.

What are the other reasons for early child marriages?

The other reasons are, **a)** Limited paid work opportunities for women and girls. For example, Assam has the second lowest female worker population ratio of just 14.2%, **b)** Poor quality and inaccessibility of facilities and services, whether in health or education.

The state governments should invest in more schools and improve the condition of existing schools

17. Article 105 of Constitution: The limits to free speech in Parliament, and what Supreme Court has ruled

Source: The post is based on the article “**Article 105 of Constitution: The limits to free speech in Parliament, and what Supreme Court has ruled**” published in **The Indian Express** on **11th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Polity

Relevance: Parliamentary Privileges and associated concerns

News: Members of Parliament enjoy certain privileges and powers under Article 105. This article provides insights into those privileges and the limitations.

What is Article 105?

Under Article 105, Members of Parliament are exempted from **any legal action for any statement made or act done in the course of their duties**. For example, a defamation suit cannot be filed for a statement made in the House.

This **immunity extends to certain non-members as well**, such as the Attorney General for India or a Minister who may not be a member but speaks in the House.

If an MP exceeds its speech limit, then it is **duty of the Speaker or the House** to deal with it. However, the article also has restrictions **such as Article 121 prohibits** any discussion in Parliament regarding the conduct of any Judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court in the discharge of his duties.

How did this idea of privilege originate?

The **Government of India Act, 1935** first brought this provision to India with references to the powers and privileges enjoyed by the House of Commons in Britain.

However, unlike India where the Constitution is supreme, Britain follows Parliamentary supremacy.

What are the various judgments of court related to parliamentary privileges?

The SC in ‘*Tej Kiran Jain v N Sanjiva Reddy*’ (1970), ruled that the word “anything” in Article 105 has wide interpretations.

Further, the SC in the case of ‘*P V Narasimha Rao vs. State*’ (1998) ruled **that the ordinary law would not apply** to the acceptance of a bribe by an MP in case of parliamentary proceedings.

The court **interpreted Article 105(2) and said that it protects MPs against proceedings in court related to anything said or a vote given in the Parliament**.

The court further said that it **will allow MPs to participate fearlessly in the Parliamentary debates** and they need wider protection of immunity against all civil and criminal proceedings that bear a nexus to their speech or vote.

General Studies Paper – 3

General Studies - 3

1. [Certainly, uncertainty has declined – on world economy](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Certainly, uncertainty has declined**” published in **The Business Standard** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance– Global economic prospects and impact on India

News– Over the past year, global macroeconomic stability has improved, which sets the stage for good growth from 2024.

What was the situation of the world economy one year ago?

The World economy was in trouble. The **foundations of price stability** were under question and central banks globally raised rates.

Sharp global tightening triggered difficulties for the world economy.

Russia attacked Ukraine. China followed the **policy of zero Covid** through repression.

What are the prospects of the global economy in current times and near future?

Inflation targeting regime of developed countries has worked well. **Monetary tightening** caused some trouble. Higher interest rates led to **difficulties of cryptocurrencies, start-ups in India, and the price corrections in tech giants** like Amazon and Google.

There is **restoration of macroeconomic stability** in the global economy. **Supply chains** have significantly corrected, assisted by China’s return to production.

The workforce in developed markets is getting back to work. By 2024, we can expect **normal values of inflation, interest rates, and asset prices**.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine looked dangerous initially. The Russian success would have led to other wars, like Chinese attacks on Taiwan.

The **radical uncertainty** has subsided as the weakness of the Russian state has been revealed. Russia’s failure in Ukraine has **improved deterrence against future invasions** by big powers. President Xi Jinping has stepped back from **aggressive behaviour** and stepped away from the lockdowns that attempted **zero covid**. **China’s vaccine nationalism** has harmed the **legitimacy of the regime**.

Things are very difficult in China right now, but there are signs of **restoration of normalcy**. The Xi regime would continue to **play the nationalism card in overcoming domestic unpopularity**. But, the experience of Russia in Ukraine will shape its behaviour.

These three factors have helped **calm financial markets**. The volatility today is lower than last year. This **restoration of macroeconomic stability** can create conditions for a period of **sustained growth** starting from 2024.

What is the way forward for businesses in India?

It is **more feasible** to make business plans because things are looking stable now.

India has a workforce that is **more tech-savvy**. This is a **good time for business building**.

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2. [India's just energy transition is more than a coal story](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's just energy transition is more than a coal story**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

Relevance– Issues related to clean energy transition

News– Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P) is emerging as the key mechanism for multilateral financing by developed countries to support an energy transition in developing countries.

India is considered the next candidate for a JET-Partnership.

What are the issues with Just Energy Transition Partnership?

Energy transitions could give rise to **intra-generational, intergenerational, and spatial equity concerns**. Transitions affect **fossil-dependent jobs**, disrupt forms of **future energy access**.

It shrinks the **State's capacity** to spend on welfare programmes. Thus, it increases the **existing economic inequities** between coal and other regions.

Existing JET-P deals pay limited attention to **intra-generational inequity**, such as job losses. Among the three JET-P deals signed so far, only South Africa's deal mentions a 'just' component.

What are the difficulties faced by India in JET-P negotiations?

These have remained stalled over **coal 'phase-down'** and how to operationalise India's **just transition**. The emphasis on coal phase-down disregards the **crucial difference in energy transition** between industrialised and emerging economies.

India's transition requires significant **simultaneous growth in energy demand**. The Central Electricity Authority projects a near doubling of electricity demand by 2030. India cannot afford to put its development on hold while decarbonising.

What are the steps taken by India for clean energy?

India has set the goal of **450 GW renewable energy capacity addition and 43% RE purchase obligation by 2030**. These targets are supported through complementary policy and legislative mandates like Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act and missions like National Green Hydrogen Mission.

Fiscal incentives through production-linked incentives are provided. **Market mechanisms** like the upcoming national carbon market supports these efforts.

What is the basic requirement for clean energy transition in India?

Accelerating the pace of Renewable Energy deployment is needed to match the pace of demand growth. In 2021-22, coal power served one-third of the new demand.

Meeting India's 2030 target requires **accelerating non-fossil capacity** addition from 16 GW a year in 2022 to 75 GW a year by 2030.

What is the way forward to achieve it?

Shifting energy demand patterns– This is low hanging fruit. It will enable faster RE capacity addition.

Solarisation of agricultural electricity demand; electrification of diesel-powered MSMEs and decentralised RE for residential cooking and heating are some of the steps needed for shift in energy demand patterns.

Components of clean energy– **Domestic manufacturing** of clean energy components is critical to sustain JET, build energy self-sufficiency. Indian components are 20% costlier than Chinese components.

Giving preference to domestic components without addressing **cost competitiveness** may slow down the pace of deployment.

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The way around this is to look for markets outside India as part of a JET-Partnership and to **reduce the cost gap through economies of scale.**

Optimal use of coal power– There is a need to **have a relook** at the current use of coal resources to **enhance efficiencies** until the period of phase-down. One option is to **optimise use of coal-fired power plants** closer to coal mining areas rather than based on energy demands.

This would enable coal to be used **more efficiently** because **transportation of coal** is more **energy-intensive**. It would also lead to **cheaper power and indirectly reduce emissions** due to more efficient use of coal.

The **investment requirements** for this transition are beyond the means of domestic capacity of developing countries. Any future JET-P deal must consider this **broader framework for financing and supporting an energy transition.**

India's G-20 presidency is an opportunity at hand to negotiate a deal for itself while also shaping international cooperation on just energy transitions.

3. [Scientists' take on the Union Budget 2023-24](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Scientists' take on the Union Budget 2023-24**" published in **The Hindu** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Budget

Relevance: announcement made in the Budget 2023-24 for science and technologies.

News: The article discusses how various science and tech organizations can play the role on the announcement made in the Budget 2023-24 and concerns associated with it.

How can different organizations help in the applications of measures announced in the Budget 2023-24?

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) – CSIR has a presence on all focus areas of this year's budget. **For example**, it plays an important role in green hydrogen research and development (R&D) under the **National Hydrogen Mission**.

It focuses on National Mission to eliminate Sickle Cell Anaemia Mission by 2047 announced in the budget.

It also has an ongoing **AI programme to augment AI application in several areas**. A new programme has been launched to promote innovation in pharmaceuticals.

Ministry of Science and Technology – The budget allocated ₹2,000 crore more to the Ministry of Science and Technology than the previous budget. This is an added advantage for the development in the field of science and tech.

Department of Biotechnology (DBT) – The budget focuses on **green growth** and biotechnology plays a major role in finding sustainable solutions for this.

DBT is developing a policy framework for **'high-performance biomanufacturing'** to have world-class facilities and workforce in synthetic biology-based manufacturing practices.

It will bring improvements in healthcare's S&T with a focus on **'One Health'**.

It will operationalise the **Tuberculosis Genomic Surveillance for drug-resistance**. It is also developing a programme to genetically characterise minor millets.

However, there are also issues with this year's budget.

What are the issues with the budget?

The **current level of S&T expenditure is inadequate** if India wants to compete at the international level in knowledge generation. **Only 0.36% of the budget** has been allocated to the Ministry of S&T.

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The budget for Departments of Biotechnology and of Scientific & Industrial Research have been reduced, adjusting for inflation. **The budget for the Department of Space has also been cut by 8%.**

Moreover, the New Education Policy 2020 recommends increasing the education spending to 6% of GDP. However, **education has only received 2.5% of this budget.**

What can be the course of action?

The government needs to have better implementation procedure for the measures announced in the budget.

Along with those, there is also need to – **a)** push agritech, millet research to get nutritional benefits in the long run, **b)** open up select **Indian Council of Medical Research labs for research to the public and private sector**, **c)** support education and research on biomedical devices, pharma and AI interdisciplinary.

4. [Hydropower projects in the Himalaya should be reconsidered given recent crisis](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Hydropower projects in the Himalaya should be reconsidered given recent crisis**” published in **The Indian Express** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: environmental impact of hydropower project and alternative to it.

News: Joshimath land subsidence has raised concerns over the hydropower projects in Himalayas. This article discusses the impact and alternatives to hydropower.

What is a hydropower?

It is a **renewable source of energy**. It is often **considered green energy** because it generates electricity from the natural flow of water without releasing any emissions. It **does not rely on fossil fuels**.

However, it also brings concerns and threats to the environment, especially in the Himalayan region.

What are the concerns with the Hydropower projects?

Most countries in the Himalayan region, including India have built or are planning to build hydropower projects in the Himalaya. The Indian government has identified hydropower as a key renewable energy source.

However, the construction of the hydropower in Himalayas brings various concerns.

The concerns are – **a)** can **bring conflicts** over water resources in the region, **b)** can **disrupt the flow of rivers**, leading to changes in water temperature and chemistry, **c)** dams can also **cause erosion, landslides**, and sedimentation which can have a negative impact on the local environment, **d)** Dams also **disrupt the migration patterns of fish and other aquatic** species and impact the local wildlife, **e)** large-scale dams **displace local communities**, affecting their livelihoods and cultural heritage and impacting the overall well-being of the local population.

Therefore, it is beneficial to look for alternatives to hydropower projects.

What can be the alternative to hydropower?

Micro hydro is a small-scale hydroelectric power generation system that generates up to 100 kilowatts (kW) of electricity.

These systems use the energy of falling water to generate electricity. They **can be used for various applications** such as powering homes, businesses, and small communities.

They are **less expensive to build and maintain** than large hydroelectric dams and have a smaller environmental footprint.

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They **can be located even in inaccessible areas** where it is difficult to transmit electricity from larger power stations and can provide a reliable source of energy to communities that are not connected to the grid.

They can be used to minimise the ecosystem's negative impact and provide sustainable energy solutions. However, even they have some impact on the environment but the impacts are less when compared to large hydropower dams.

5. [The tax gambit – Government should not stop nudging people towards safe, long-term savings](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“The tax gambit – Government should not stop nudging people towards safe, long-term savings”** published in **The Hindu** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting.

Relevance: About new income tax system.

News: During the budget speech, the government introduced the new income tax system.

What is the new income tax system?

Read here: [New tax regime gives spending flexibility](#)

The new system was based on the thought that the individual is the best judge of his/her income.

What are the advantages of the new income tax system?

Read more: [New income tax regime: A nudge on income tax mustn't become a shove](#)

Why new income tax system's idea of the individual is the best judge of his/her income is flawed?

Though, the statement is individually valid the lower income earners will not benefit a lot from the system. This is because, **a)** Lower income earners do not save enough to avail of the tax exemptions and end up paying higher rates, **b)** India's low literacy and financial literacy levels will make taxpayers' mix of consumption and savings complicated, **c)** Adult humans do not behave as rationally as economists and invest in inflation-beating investments, **d)** Financial products are routinely mis-sold to those not equipped to understand market nuances and the risks embedded, **e)** India's retail participation in stocks may have risen in recent years, but not everyone can handle the risks of equity markets or avoid being tricked by influencer-operators. Above all, there are no universal social security and health benefits in India. The old exemption-based regime helps guide families towards some level of prudent asset allocation to cope with life's uncertainties.

What should be done to make the new income tax system comprehensive?

Before taking away the old tax regime the government must **ensure adequate financial literacy efforts and crack down on unethical selling practices** of stocks, insurance and other financial products. Further, if such a state is achieved then the government should **revisit the idea of mandatory contributions** to provident funds and pensions.

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6. [Bajra Boosters – Policies promoting millets will not work unless governments address farmers’ incentives](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“Bajra Boosters – Policies promoting millets will not work unless governments address farmers’ incentives” published in **The Times of India** on **6th February 2023**.

“India’s promotion of millets is great but will likely fail” published in the **Live Mint** on **6th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About promotion of millets.

News: In the recent budget speech, Finance Minister praised millets as noble food and mentioned the government’s initiatives for the promotion of millets.

What are Millets?

Must read: [What are Millets?](#)

Why promotion of millets deserves a special push?

The modern world is a slave to sugary foods: Glucose is a simple form of sugar. The faster food becomes sugar, the more appealing it is to consumers. Hence, rice and wheat succeeded faster. They have killed or diminished the lives of hundreds of millions of people by injecting them with too much sugar.

On the other hand, millets turn into glucose inside body slowly. This is also why they are considered healthy.

Millets, like rice and wheat, have a high ratio of carbohydrates. But they also have fibre. The amount of fibre present in millet slows the conversion of food into glucose.

Note: *After the stomach converts food into glucose and releases it into the bloodstream, the pancreas release insulin, which sends glucose to the cells for energy, reducing the sugar level in the blood. But when a person releases a high amount of glucose into the bloodstream for several years, the cells begin to defy the hormone and do not absorb as much glucose as they are supposed to.*

As a result, many destructive things occur. Organs marinate in high blood sugar for hours, which damages them; the excess sugar is eventually converted into fatty acids and stored in the fat cells of various body parts.

Read here: [Multidimensional benefits associated with enhancing millet cultivation](#)

How government is promoting millets?

-In 2013, the government launched a **crop diversification programme** to shift acreage away from paddy in the original Green Revolution regions, Punjab, Haryana and western UP. Later, the Haryana government even offered a **cash subsidy of Rs 7,000/acre to shift cultivation** to alternate crops.

Read here: [Centre, States to join hands to promote millets consumption and Centre formulates action plan to promote exports of millets and value-added products of millets](#)

What should be done to promote millets?

Inclusion of millets in Public Distribution System and MSP: The government has to guarantee a floor price for millets. This will disincentivise rice and wheat cultivation.

The world’s largest food security scheme covering about 800 million people is giving more attention to rice and wheat. This has to shift in favour of the promotion of millets.

Read here: [A region-specific strategy and their introduction in mid-day meals could boost millets cultivation](#)

7. [Green growth push – New initiatives have long-term potential](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Green growth push – New initiatives have long-term potential**” published in the **Business Standard** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation.

Relevance: About the green growth push in the Budget 2023-24.

News: The Union Budget has focussed on many green growth push initiatives that can lead to an environmentally conscious lifestyle.

What are the initiatives in the budget that focus on the green growth push?

Green growth has been listed among the seven priorities of the Budget for 2023-24.

Read more: [Major thrust planned for green energy](#)

The other initiatives include **a)** incentivising the use of green hydrogen and biofuels; **b)** conserving natural ecological safeguards like mangroves and wetlands; **c)** introducing concepts like green credit; and **d)** striving for an appreciable reduction in sources of pollution through measures like replacing polluting vehicles with non-polluting ones and chemical fertilisers with organic manures.

What is the rationale behind the announced green growth push initiatives in the Budget?

Read here: [Going green – The Budget can help India transition out of its dependence on fossil fuels](#)

-The bulk of the Energy Transition Fund would be at the disposal of the oil-marketing companies to enable them to switch to new and renewable sources of energy.

-The allocation of funds for the National Green Hydrogen Mission is expected to make India a net exporter of green hydrogen.

What are the advantages of the government’s green growth push?

The government’s heavy expenses will be paid back sooner and have the potential to pay lasting dividends. For instance, in the solar-energy sector, the payback time in the case of alternative sources of energy is rapidly shrinking due to the constant inflow of cost-effective and more efficient technologies.

8. [Jammu, village defence and governance](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Jammu, village defence and governance**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance– Security situation in Jammu and Kashmir

News– There is a rise in terror-related strikes in the relatively peaceful Jammu division, especially in the border districts. Recently, the government decided to revive Village Defence Committees(VDCs).

What are some facts associated with VDCs?

VDCs were set up to instil a **sense of self protection**. The district’s superintendent of police was mandated to **exercise command and control**.

VDCs have played a crucial role in **containing militancy in the Jammu division**, after being set up in the mid-1990s.

VDC presence was concentrated **in remote areas**. Their difficult terrain and a meagre presence of security forces made chances of successful operations remote.

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VDCs were trained to hold the front against militants **till the arrival of security forces.**

What were issues with these VDCs?

In several cases, the VDCs have proved to be **counterproductive.** There were instances of cadres abusing their authority. They faced allegations of **human rights violations.**

A **'false notion of power'** developed in the minds of the VDC cadre. It led to potentially adverse fallouts, leading to the decision to revive them.

What are improvements needed in VDCs?

Command and control– State policy on the VDCs must now aim to mitigate the negatives. The issue should be viewed through the prism of **human resources management of the cadres.**

There needs to be an evolution of a **hands-down command and control mechanism.** The present methodology of being under the superintendent of police may not be the ideal arrangement.

A good control mechanism is needed to ensure that cadres remain motivated and focused.

Strengthening Panchayats– The revival of the VDC should be used as an **opportunity to empower the local bodies.** Panchayats are most suited to **understand local dynamics** in a conflict zone.

Panchayats could be entrusted with the task of assisting the local police in an **institutionalised manner.**

This will create advantages such as **quality checks** on the character of VDC cadres during the selection stage, **monitoring their activities and consolidated control** through oversight and deterrence.

Operational level measures– The VDCs should not be involved in **proactive intelligence and tactical operations.** They must instead remain confined to **'self defence and deterrence roles'.**

9. [What will drive global growth?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"What will drive global growth?"** published in **Business Standard** on **7th February 2023.**

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Growth and Development**

Relevance: factors responsible for growth in A-10 economies

News: The demographic shift in 10 major Asian economies (**the A-10:** China, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, Malaysia, and Taiwan) is faster than the economic transition.

The article discusses the factors that can have impact on global growth.

How has been the contribution of A-10 economies to global GDP?

The contribution of A-10 economies to global GDP growth has risen steadily. It has reached **70 percent between 2014 and 2019**, from 40 percent in the previous five years.

The main driver of this growth **has been growth rise in China** along with the steady growth in India and ASEAN economies.

There are factors that affects the global growth of GDP in the A-10 economies.

What are the factors that affect the growth?

Total Factor Productivity (TFP): TFP is a measure of efficiency which means the efficient utilization of the human and capital inputs to generate output. A substantial part of the growth deceleration in A-10 GDP between 2015 and 2019 has been **due to weaker TFP growth.**

It was strong in India and Thailand over this period, but slowed for other economies and turned negative for China. Hence, **the contribution of TFP to overall GDP growth can be large over time.**

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Labour Input: Labour size **has not been a large driver of growth** for the last 15 years. Labour growth slowed to 0.4 percent a year in the 2005–14 period, and 0.3 percent between 2014 and 2019, with limited contribution to overall growth.

Therefore, even if population ageing slows down, the number of available workers would have a limited incremental impact on growth.

Capital Inputs: The **capital formation has been the largest contributor to GDP growth in the A-10 in the last two decades**. There has been considerable jump in capital use in several countries, including India, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Capital inputs are mostly affected by regulations. However, demographics also play an important role in the demand for investments, especially for real-estate and infrastructure.

China's high capital growth has been due to its focus on infrastructure spending and the surge in real estate investment.

Real estate contributes 15 per cent to China's GDP, versus around 5 per cent for the developed Asian markets with ageing populations.

Therefore, slowing capital formation in China could be a significant growth headwind for the world.

Thus, the impact of an ageing A-10 on the world is less due to labour supply, and more due to slow growth in capital deployment in demographically challenged North Asia.

Slowing total factor productivity growth in some major A-10 economies is another headwind.

What can be the way ahead for India?

India needs to learn a lesson from these observations that the GDP growth can only occur with faster growth in capital formation because labour input is hard to change and TFP changes slowly.

The real-estate cycle in India is turning positive. However, India's growth in coming years will not be large enough to affect global growth.

Hence, **policies that facilitate inbound foreign investment** can help India in its growth.

10. How are earthquakes measured and how massive is the Turkey one?

Source: This post is created based on the article "**How are earthquakes measured and how massive is the Turkey one?**", published in Indian Express on 7th Feb, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Disaster management

News: Recently, an earthquake of magnitude 7.8 struck south-central Turkey and Northwest Syria.

Reports have put the number of fatalities in thousands. This earthquake is of the same magnitude as one that killed about 30,000 people in December 1939.

As per the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) the quake was centred about 33 km from Gaziantep, around 18 km deep.

Earth's Mechanism behind earthquakes

Earth's surface is made up of tectonic plates, which are constantly moving but at a very slow pace. These plates often get stuck or pushing against each other traps the energy. Often this energy is released by the earth in the form of waves, travelling through earth's crust that results in vibration and lead to earthquakes.

Measurement of the earthquake

Seismographs are used to record earthquakes. When the earth shakes, the recording device on seismographs records the reading of the ground motion. Now these devices work by measuring electronic changes produced by the motion of the ground with respect to the mass.

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Magnitude measurement

One of the most important measures of magnitude is Richter Scale. It was devised in 1935 by Charles Francis Richter. One step up in measurement represents a tenfold increase in magnitude. Therefore, an earthquake measuring 7 on the Richter Scale has 10 times the magnitude of one measured 6.

However, Moment Magnitude Scale (denoted as Mw) was developed due to limitations of Richter scale.

Measuring the intensity

Intensity measures the amount of shaking at a particular location. There are Intensity scales, like the Modified Mercalli Scale and the Rossi-Forel scale.

Earthquakes of lower magnitude can be more intense if they are located in more shallow ground or if the area where they occur has more loose soil, etc.

The Modified Mercalli Scale, the most commonly used intensity scale, ranks earthquake intensity on a scale of I. (not felt) to XII. (extreme). The maximum intensity measured in Turkey's earthquake is IX. or violent.

11. [Ballooning Options To Spy](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article "**Ballooning Options To Spy**", published in **Times of India** on 7th Feb, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Science and technology,

News: The Chinese airship that was shot down over US soil brought to light new spying technologies, some of which India should work on.

Advantages of Spy balloons over spy satellites

Orbits of spy satellites are almost predictable. Satellites may be relocated or moved from orbit, however this requires fuel, which is very low on these satellites and is reserved for critical duties. There are many advantages of spy balloons over spy satellites or aircrafts:

1. They can fly at high altitudes, beyond of range of many air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles.
2. Airships can hover for long durations, making them ideal for watching an enemy's naval drills.
3. Finally, radar-absorbent material may help airships hide.
4. Airships help India monitor its unstable borders. Airships can identify traffickers and rescue fishing vessels around India's borders and littorals. Airships may follow ships at sea, notably in peacetime and non-wartime situations.

Other Dual-use surveillance technologies: Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles (UUVs)

Indonesian fisherman caught at least two Chinese Sea Wing UUVs in 2019 and 2020.

In 2019, one such survey ship entered India's EEZ near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands before being instructed to leave.

China's dual-use UUVs aren't alone in maritime surveillance. The PLA navy captured an American UUV near the Philippines in 2016, which was released later.

Four additional Sandhayak-class survey ships will join the Indian navy's six. Though specifics are unclear, these ships can launch remotely-operated and autonomous UUVs.

What should India do?

India will face new espionage technologies. States and non-state actors may employ low-cost commercial drones as aerial espionage.

India must develop cost-effective ways to shoot down inexpensive drones without using expensive air-to-air missiles, as well as specialised jammers.

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China conducted rendezvous and proximity operations (RPO) satellites that approached another orbiting ship. RPOs can repair, refuel, or sabotage other vessels, but they can also absorb communications.

India must work with the private sector and other like-minded nations to improve its space situational awareness to deal with RPOs.

12. Women-centric development – India Inc must help enhance the role of women in nation building

Source: The post is based on the article “**India Inc must help enhance the role of women in nation building**” published in **Live Mint** on **7th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Inclusive growth and issues arising from it..

Relevance: About women-centric development.

News: A paradigm shift is observed in reorienting India’s direction of economic growth, especially in curating women-centric career opportunities.

What is India’s progress in women-centric development?

From freedom fighters and political heroes to business successes, women leaders have exemplified ‘Naari Shakti’. Such as, **a)** The literacy rate of women has been rising steadily since independence, **b)** India is also bridging the gender literacy gap, **c)** India is pursuing an idea of ‘women-led development, and **d)** From space, aviation, science, sports, business, philanthropy and education to any other sphere, India have examples that do every citizen proud and serve as role models.

However, all this needs to go alongside steadily rising female labour participation.

Why women-centric development is essential?

a) India’s \$5 trillion economy aim can’t be realized without women’s contribution to GDP, **b)** By offering equal opportunity to women, the country could add an estimated \$770 billion to its GDP by 2025 and raise its household per capita income higher than it would otherwise be, and **c)** women’s empowerment will have a ripple effect in the society.

What are the challenges to women-centric development?

Lack of upskilling, a sense of complacency and missing chances for networking while meeting family and social responsibilities have been identified as drawbacks for women in their career progression.

What should be done to improve women-centric development?

-Leaders must design **gender-neutral leadership roles** to foster a cohesive ecosystem and enable women to rise. This is because a gender balance in managerial ranks is globally considered a sign of economic progress.

- An **overhaul of educational and parental inculcation** and **rejection of gender prejudice** are critical elements for a cross-sectional transformation to maximize Naari Shakti.

13. India must reduce its public debt ratio to build economic resilience

Source- The post is based on the article “**India must reduce its public debt ratio to build economic resilience**” published in the **mint** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government budgeting

Relevance- Issues related to public debt and government borrowing

News- The new budget has a credible plan to reduce the fiscal deficit as a proportion of India GDP.

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What are the implications of high public debt ratio for macroeconomic policy over the medium term?

Interest cost of servicing this public debt reduces the capacity of the government to **spend on essential things** like infrastructure, welfare and defence.

It **reduces the capacity** of the government in responding to future shocks.

RBI ability to conduct **independent monetary policy** to control inflation is impacted.

How can public debt be managed?

Any strategy to reduce public debt needs to be built on **three pillars**–

There must be **acceleration in nominal GDP growth**.

Acceleration in nominal GDP growth should be seen in context of the **cost of government borrowings**.

The focus of fiscal policy must be to reduce not only the **headline deficit but also the primary deficit**.

The experience of previous decades provides us with useful context. **Public debt** came down by 17% between 2002 and 2011. This period can be broken down into two.

The first part of success was because of the **high growth rate**. It led to a **sharp fall in primary deficit**. In the second part, **nominal GDP grew at a fast pace** despite the global financial crisis. This was possible by **high inflation**.

What is the future scenario of public debt for the Indian economy?

Trajectory of public debt will depend on growth in economic output, inflation, interest rate and fiscal policy.

Nominal GDP in coming years is likely to be in **very low double digits**, unless there is **structural shift in potential growth and inflation**. The gap between nominal GDP and inflation will be low.

So, the **automatic drivers** bringing down public debt will not work. Government will have to use fiscal policy to **bring down the primary deficit**.

[14. U.S. shot down a Chinese 'spy' balloon](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “U.S. shot down a Chinese ‘spy’ balloon”, published in The Hindu on 8th Feb 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology – Defence Technologies

Read more- [Advantages of Spy balloons over spy satellites](#)

On Jan 28, defence and military officials confirmed that a Chinese reconnaissance balloon has entered the US air defence zone.

Soon the balloon was shot down by a short-range AIM-9X Sidewinder missile of US.

What are spy balloons?

Spy balloons are high-altitude surveillance tools. They usually operate at 80,000-1,20,000 feet to gather intelligence. This height is well above the altitude of commercial aircraft.

These spy balloons are equipped with cameras and imaging devices.

Unlike satellites, balloons are economically viable. Due to their proximity to the Earth's surface, they can widely scan an area from close quarters and capture clearer, high-resolution images of the target.

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15. [Boosting pharma research](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “Boosting pharma research”, published in Business Standard on 8th Feb 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Industries and industrial policies

News: Government is going to introduce research-linked incentive (RLI) scheme for pharmaceutical sector, just like PLI scheme for other sectors.

Not much is clear about the scheme, but specific areas within the pharma sector — including antibiotics and biosimilars, could be the target areas.

What are the needs of boost to pharmaceutical sector?

Research and development (R&D) spending in the sector is too low.

In fact, multinational pharma companies operating in India are spending higher part of their domestic revenue on R & D than by Indian companies.

R & D is still not considered profitable by companies. Because they have not yet seen visible returns on any successful innovation in India.

What are things to be considered before launching the scheme?

If RLIs are linked to individual projects, then there will be a dilemma whether higher R&D will be achieved over time without unsustainable expenditure by the government.

A separate vertical for incentives for micro, small, and medium enterprises to invest in R&D cannot replace the need for access to basic science and cheap financing and human capital that allows such start-ups to flourish.

It would be difficult to identify sub-sectors within the pharma business that would be the most productive recipients of RLI.

16. [Private sector has not responded to government initiatives so far](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Private sector has not responded to government initiatives so far**” published in **The Indian Express** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Changing structure of economy

News– Despite record profits of the larger firms and the increase in capital spending by the public sector, a broad-based recovery in private sector investments and consumption has not materialised.

What are the broad points that show the changing structure of the Indian economy?

Profits of larger firms– Larger firms have shown the trend of the **rising share of capital and the falling share of labour** in national income. A few big firms now account for a higher portion of profits.

In 2019-20, 433 firms had reported profits **in excess of Rs 500 crore**. In 2020-21, the first year of the pandemic, this rose to 517.

There were 1,558 companies whose profits ranged **between Rs 100-500 crore**. Together these firms accounted for 77.41% of all profits. These firms represent just 0.2% of the entire corporate sector.

Corporate tax regime– For companies having profit above 500 crores, the **effective tax rate** is around 19.14%. It is much lower than that for the smaller-sized companies.

For firms with profits in the **range of 0-1 crore and 1-10 crore**, the tax rate was 24.82% and 23.13% respectively.

These **tax rate differentials** imply that the larger firms have either availed of the higher **deductions or incentives under the old tax regime** or have shifted to the **new regime of lower taxes**.

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So far, 20% of all firms have opted for the **exemption-less regime**. These firms account for a little more than 60% of total income.

This suggests that the **larger, more profitable firms** are opting to shift. There are also indications that this regime has perhaps led to a reduction in tax disputes.

However, only 3,508 companies had opted for the 15% tax regime during this period. This suggests that lower tax rates were perhaps **not strong enough incentive for fresh private sector investments** in the manufacturing sector.

New Income tax structure– The **new personal income tax regime** has not seen much traction. Migration to the new regime will depend on the **extent of individuals taking advantage of the existing exemptions**. The revenue foregone by the government on these items are still high. Calculations suggest that if a salaried taxpayer is availing of exemptions for investments and medical insurance, then the switching point will perhaps be a little less than Rs 9 lakh.

However, the more the exemptions are availed, higher will be the income threshold at which the individual will want to switch to the new tax framework.

Increased public investment– The larger public sector now accounts for a **much bigger share of overall investment** in the economy than before.

At the end of 2022-23, **capital expenditure by the public sector** was around a quarter of all investments in the economy. Their share is up by roughly 5% since 2014-15.

In the coming year, if state governments match the central government's **increase in capex**, then the **share of the public sector in total investments** in the economy may be closer to 30%.

[17. Make In IndIA – As Google comes up with a ChatGPT rival & AI becomes ubiquitous, here's what GoI must do](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Make In IndIA – As Google comes up with a ChatGPT rival & AI becomes ubiquitous, here's what GoI must do**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Awareness in the fields of IT.

Relevance: About AI research.

News: Recently, Google said that a new artificial intelligence (AI) service named Bard is being tested ahead of a public launch. Its public launch will make it the second generative AI, after ChatGPT.

What is AI research?

AI doesn't have a precise definition. It's best described as a constellation of technologies. The idea arises from English mathematician Alan Turing's work in 1950 where he suggested a machine could be programmed to learn from experience like children do. AI rests on three pillars: data, algorithms and computing power.

What is ChatGPT?

Must read: [What is OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot, why it has become a viral sensation](#)

What is the potential of Generative AI?

Read more: [The potential of generative AI: creating media with simple text prompts](#)

How global nations are promoting AI research?

a) A lot of US government support to domestic AI development is routed through its defence industry, **b)** China also allocated state resources behind its attempt to dominate the AI market.

How Indian government is promoting AI research in its recent budget?

Acknowledging AI's importance, the budget announced that three centres of excellence in AI will be set up in top educational institutions, with the private sector contributing to the effort.

Read more: [AI chatbot, my future colleague](#)

What should be done to improve AI research in India?

Government needs to prioritise **Large-scale funding** and the **creation of research ecosystems** that draw in global Indian talent in AI.

AI is already in extensive use at the commercial level. Indian firms at present have **access to domestic talent** now they should also have **access to data** also. Indian firms need a **sound regulatory framework** that allows access to a lot more anonymised data.

Government's expert committee suggested **open access to non-personal data**. For that, India's should **establish a legal framework** to both safeguard privacy and provide open access to anonymised data for Indian startups.

Overall, with the AI's technological frontier, India can have a chance of leapfrogging few traditional stages of growth.

18. [Signs of a weakening public sector](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Signs of a weakening public sector**" published in the **Business Standard** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting.

Relevance: About fiscal relations between the Centre and states and PSUs.

News: The Budget reveals the nature of the Centre's financial engagement with public sector undertakings (PSU).

About Centre's fiscal relations with states

The Centre's fiscal relations with states are principally governed by the recommendations of the Finance Commission. Accordingly, states have a 41% share in the total taxes (Only in net shareable tax proceeds but not in cesses and surcharges) collected by the Union government.

In the last few years, the share of collections from various cesses and surcharges has gone up steadily. From about 5% of the Centre's gross tax collections in 2017-18 to about 13% in the revised estimate of the Budget this year. Hence, the State's share in the Centre's gross tax collections has declined to 30-33%.

How the budget responded to Cess and Surcharges?

Cesses and surcharges in 2023-24 are expected to see one of the lowest increases in recent years. This is because, **a)** The share of cesses and surcharges in the gross domestic product (GDP) is declining, for the first time in the last three years, to 1.35%, **b)** The super-rich tax has come down from 42.7% to 39% because the surcharge on it has been slashed from 37% to 25%.

Why the states are happy with the recent budget?

1) The revenue hit from cess and surcharge reduction will be borne entirely by the Centre and, therefore, would not affect the amount of tax transfer to the states, **2)** States will witness an increased allocation of capital expenditure advances by 30%, **3)** The states get assistance from the Centre by way of grants and loans. This is not reduced in the recent budget.

Why the PSUs are happy with the recent budget?

The budget for 2023-24 has been generous with its capital expenditure. A large chunk of its capital outlay would be routed through capital support to PSUs. For instance, in 2022-23, PSUs accounted for over half of the government's capital expenditure, up from a share of 42% in 2021-22.

What are the challenges faced by PSUs recently?

a) There is a decline in the share of the PSUs' own contribution to their total capital outlay on projects. Hence, PSUs are increasingly becoming more dependent on the Centre to meet their

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capital expenditure requirements. For instance, the gradual weakening of the PSUs is clearly visible from the state of the Indian Railways.

In 2023-24, Railways would be helped by Rs 2.4 trillion of capital support from the Centre. But its own contribution to its capital projects will decline to 18%.

b) There is also a lack of accountability in ensuring a decent return on such investment. Overall, the government must expedite its plan for asset sale and privatisation.

19. [A Nordic-India connect to power a green transition](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A Nordic-India connect to power a green transition**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Bilateral, Regional groupings and agreement affecting India interests

Relevance– Relations between India and Nordic countries

News– Trade Ministers of Norway and Finland are currently visiting India together.

What is the importance of the Nordic region?

Over the last decades, Nordic countries have been at the forefront of developing **new green technologies and solutions** such as hydrogen, offshore wind, and carbon capture and storage. The Nordics have succeeded in building **stable, secure, welfare based societies** to a large extent.

The Nordic region has ambitions to become the **most sustainable and integrated region** in the world by 2030.

What is the current status of relations between India and Nordic countries?

The **Nordic -India Summit** was held in Copenhagen in May 2022. The five Nordic leaders and Indian Prime Minister agreed to intensify cooperation on **digitalisation, renewable energy, maritime industries, and the circular economy**.

PM of India expressed an interest in joint Nordic solutions that can support **India’s green transition**.

The **Nordic business community** in India is also growing. There are now 240 Norwegian and Finnish companies in India.

India and Finland– The past year has seen a significant rise in **trade and investments** between Finland and India.

India has grown to become a **priority country for Finland**. Finland has recently opened a new Consulate General in Mumbai.

Several Indian companies are looking towards Finland for its expertise in areas of **technology and innovation, sustainability, digitalisation, carbon neutrality** and more.

An increasing number of Indian students, researchers, and experts have been moving to Finland as well. Finnish companies such as Nokia and Fortum have some of their **most significant investments** in India.

India and Norway– Trade between Norway and India has doubled in the last three years. The **Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund** is likely to become one of India’s largest single foreign investors with around \$17.6 Billion investment.

The Norwegian government has also recently established a **new Climate Investment Fund** for investments in renewables abroad, and India has been defined as a focus country. Almost ₹1,500 crore have been invested so far in India through the climate investment fund.

What is the scope for future collaborations between India and Nordic countries?

Both Norway and Finland have ongoing **free trade agreement and investments negotiations** with India. Finland, is a part of the EU- India FTA negotiations, and Norway is negotiating through the European Free Trade Association.

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Finalising the **free trade and investments agreements** should be a priority.

There is a great deal of complementarities in our trade relations. In addition, **trade in services** is an area of significant potential, especially with **tourism, education, IT, energy, maritime and financial services**.

Together, the Nordics and India can **power the green transition** the world needs.

20. The role of labour unions in emerging sectors

Source– The post is based on the article **“The role of labour unions in emerging sectors”** published in **The Hindu** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and employment

Relevance– Labour rights

News–There have been many reports of layoffs in the last few months, especially in emerging sectors.

In 2022, startups including Byju’s announced lay-offs. At the global level, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, Microsoft, Twitter and Apple have laid off employees.

What is the current status of trade unionism in the emerging sector?

There are **Unionisation attempts** in these giant companies. Amazon workers at the warehouse at Staten Island called JFK8 succeeded in forming the Amazon Labour Union.

On the other hand, employees at the warehouse near Albany voted overwhelmingly against unionisation in October 2022 as many of them were sceptical of the bargaining power of a union against a giant like Amazon.

In India, the **Information Technology Employees Senate**, which works for the welfare rights of IT professionals, complained to the Union Labour Minister about retrenchment by Amazon.

Why forming unions in modern and emerging sectors is much more difficult as compared to conventional industries?

IT- Services employees felt no need for trade unions as unions are typically associated with **manual labour**. IT employees are associated with **“elitism” and “professionalism”**.

They have **competitive compensation pay packages, supposedly good conditions of work and a mechanism to address grievances**. So, they stay on and are loyal to the company and the industry.

They switch to other organisations as they have the **required skill sets**. They do not **collectively bargain or resort to legal action** as middle class employees who go to court would be stigmatised.

Unions in the IT sector have to deal with both **Indian and Western giants**. It is a huge task.

The state obviously needs MNCs to stay on in India.

Multi-national corporations don’t take labour departments seriously. They ignore conciliation meetings more often than trade unions.

What are other issues faced by labour Unionism in India?

Trade unions are fighting on multiple fronts. They are struggling for **historical labour rights, social security for the informal workers** and fighting against **adversities created during and after COVID-19**.

Industrial accidents are frequent. Many garment and electronics industries violate labour rights.

Unions have sometimes succeeded in securing marginal rights. But there is only so much that they can do.

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21. [Counting the Female Labour Force Participation Rate accurately](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Counting the Female Labour Force Participation Rate accurately**” published in **The Indian Express** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and employment

Relevance– Measurement of statistics related to employment

News– Economic Survey tries to address a longstanding policy problem by developing a better method to count women’s participation in the labour force

What is PLFS?

It is defined as the **percentage of persons in the labour force** in the population. LFPR is the percentage of the population that is employed, or is looking for work, but is unemployed.

What is the importance of women participation in the workforce?

As per a **McKinsey report**, if India achieved gender equality, it would add 700 billion US dollars to GDP in 2025. **Annual GDP growth** will increase by 1.4%. There are other such studies with other such numbers.

What are the issues with calculation of PLFS by official estimates?

In any informal economy, arriving at numbers like LFPR is difficult. An **enterprise survey** won’t work. Despite **increasing formalisation**, **self-employment** is large.

Even within the formal sector, **informal contracts** are the norm. Roughly 50% of employment is **self-employment**. More than 20% is **wage employment** with a regular contract and the rest is casual labour.

Hence, employment numbers have to be generated through household surveys, not enterprise ones.

Economic survey observations– Economic Survey 2022-23 highlights an important measurement issue. The **common narrative of Indian women’s low LFPR** misses the reality of working females **integral to the economy of the household and the country**.

Measurement of employment through the **survey design and content** can make a significant difference to final LFPR estimates. This matters more for measuring female LFPR than male LFPR.

Three main measurement issues have been highlighted: **Overly broad categories**, reliance on a single question to categorise labour force status, and the **narrow approach** of limiting productive work to labour force participation.

Use of overly broad categories that clubs productive work like collection of firewood, poultry farming with domestic duties can shift a significant proportion of women in the labour force into the **out-of-labour-force category**.

For example, unless the production of primary goods is identified as the main activity by the respondent, the PLFS would categorise women who do both domestic activities and primary goods production as out-of-the-labour-force.

Using the **improved methodology**, the Survey recomputes female LFPR with a better definition. Female LFPR is counted **46.2% for FY21** for ages 15 years and above. It is much higher than the 32.5% estimated by the conventional definition.

ILO estimates– A similar attempt was made in an International Labour Organisation research paper published in 2014. It arrived at a female **LFPR of 56.4%** in India for 2012, against the lower official estimate of 31.2% for 2012.

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22. Our unique EV transition is a leadership opportunity

Source: The post is based on the article “Our unique EV transition is a leadership opportunity” published in the **Live Mint** on **9th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About electric 2Ws and 3Ws transition.

News: The 2023-24 budget gave the EV industry a boost by announcing the removal of customs duties on capital goods used for manufacturing lithium cells used in Electric vehicles.

A greater **focus on passenger three-wheelers and commercial two-wheelers** can accelerate India’s green push by improving livelihoods while reducing environmental and transport costs.

What are the challenges faced by EVs?

Electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers (including e-rickshaws) accounted for 92% of EVs registered in the country in 2022. Despite clear economic gains and the availability of EV models, e-2Wheelers(e-2Ws) and e-3Wheelers(e-3Ws) are still not being adopted at the desired pace.

Only 4.5% of three-wheelers registered last year were electric. Similarly, e-2Ws made up just 3.9% of total two-wheelers sales last year.

What are the advantages of the adoption of electric 2Ws and 3Ws?

Analysis by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) shows the total cost of owning an electric three-wheeler (e-3W) is 13-46% lower than that of owning similar vehicles using petrol, diesel and compressed natural gas. When drivers switch to electric, a 30% increase in daily savings is enough to pay back an e-3W loan.

What are the challenges faced in the adoption of electric 2Ws and 3Ws transition?

The slow uptake can be attributed to low awareness, lack of trust in EV performance, high finance cost, poor visibility and poor access to charging infrastructure.

What should be done to promote the electric 2Ws and 3Ws transition?

Setting up EV credit guarantee trust funds to de-risk financiers: Most 2W delivery riders and 3W drivers rely on high-interest loans from informal markets. MSMEs, which face a similar challenge, have benefited from credit guarantee funds. Hence, it should be extended to commercial EV segment as well.

Make chargers easily accessible: Auto-rickshaws spend their operational and non-operational idle times at specific parking locations with high footfall. Similarly, 2W delivery riders spend their idle time near pick-up hubs and restaurants. Hence, the charging infrastructure should be strategically developed for them.

Incentivize battery swapping ecosystems: Time loss is crucial for commercial EVs. So, India should promote interoperability among heterogeneous fleets within the same battery-swapping ecosystems.

Allocate higher funds to improve awareness: Swachh Bharat Mission-like awareness is required to improve awareness of FAME scheme.

India should double its electric 2Ws and 3Ws transition to maximize its benefits for the environment, people’s livelihoods and the Indian economy. With this, India has an opportunity to lead the efforts of other Asian emerging economies to chart their inclusive energy-transition strategies.

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23. [All governments are crony capitalists](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**All governments are crony capitalists**” published in the **Business Standard** on **9th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About business-political nexus.

News: Political connections for business purposes often happen due to complex rules and regulations and the evasive nature of rules in India. The recent [Hindenburg report on the Adani group](#) again created a debate on the business-political nexus.

Why there is a debate on the business-political nexus at present?

This is because the **a)** Adani group has a dominant presence in areas in which government policy plays a major role — ports, airports, electricity, green energy — and the principal competition mostly comes from the public sector, **b)** CAG report also raised questions about “undue benefits” that the Gujarat government gave to Adani Ports by waiving waterfront and other charges, **c)** Involvement of government-owned Public Sector Banks participation and **d)** Both the NITI Aayog and the finance ministry raised questions citing financial risk and performance issues in the Adani group’s airport projects.

What are a few examples highlighting the business-political nexus?

The telecom sector spectrum allocation has highlighted the business-political nexus. The Supreme Court’s judgement cancelled all those allocated licences.

The sand mafias, who are destroying the environment, would never have flourished without local political backing.

The construction business, which has long been India’s largest and fastest growing employer, is a good example of cronyism.

To prevent the business-political nexus some degree of moderation is required to ensure the government’s incorruptibility.

24. [Quake Up Call – Turkiye, Syria impact magnified by poor construction. India must ensure building codes are followed](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Quake Up Call – Turkiye, Syria impact magnified by poor construction. India must ensure building codes are followed**” published in **The Times of India** on **9th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster Management.

Relevance: About earthquake-resistant construction.

News: Recently, an earthquake of magnitude 7.8 struck south-central Turkey and Northwest Syria. **Poor construction and rampant violation of building code** is the primary reason for widespread damages in Turkey and Syria.

Around 59% of India is prone to earthquakes of different magnitudes – 11% in the very high-risk Zone V to 30% in Zone III. Hence, earthquake-resistant construction is essential in India to avoid such damage.

About the earthquake in Turkey

Read more: [How are earthquakes measured and how massive is the Turkey one?](#)

About the status of earthquake-resistant construction in India

India doesn’t have norms for earthquake-resistant construction. As they require 3-4% extra of the total construction cost for residential buildings and 2-3% extra for offices.

Even though National Building Code (NBC) 2016 has a specific section on earthquake-resistant design and construction. But there’s no law asking for compliance.

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For instance, In Delhi an estimated 90% of buildings are at risk of collapsing in case of a strong earthquake.

What should be done to ensure earthquake-resistant construction?

Earthquakes can't be predicted, but measures to minimise loss of lives must be prioritised. This can be done by **a) There needs to be greater public awareness about NBC guidelines** to boost voluntary compliance, **b) Municipalities should be encouraged to adopt NBC guidelines in their building bye-laws**, making them mandatory.

25. [Global green growth conundrum](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Global green growth conundrum**” published in the **Business Standard** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance– Green transition of economy across the globe

News– Green growth is the overarching theme across the world. Every country is wooing investment in manufacturing. There is a “buy local” wave depending on the “make at home” initiative.

What are initiatives taken by countries across the globe for domestic manufacturing of components needed for green transition?

The US climate law, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) passed last year offers **incentives for local manufacturing** of batteries and electric vehicles and also gives a boost to **technologies like carbon capture**.

As per **BloombergNEF estimates**, about \$35 billion have been committed to the **North American electric vehicle supply chain** since the new law was passed. Over half of this is for battery manufacturing.

India's self-reliance initiatives cover 14 sectors under the **production-linked incentive scheme** for **domestic manufacturing** including batteries and solar panels.

The **European Union** is planning its own set of incentives to boost local manufacturing and ensure that competitive offers by other countries do not affect investments and jobs. It has unveiled the “**Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age**”.

Canada plans to bring its **own incentives** in line with those of the US. **Australia, Brazil and Chile** are likely to explore similar options.

China has a dominant presence in the **battery** as well as the **solar supply chain**. It is considering proposals to restrict export of certain equipment for making solar ingots and wafers.

What shows the focus of the Indian government on green growth?

Green growth is the overarching theme across the world.

It was a core part of the Indian government's Budget for 2023-2024. There were as many as **25 mentions of “green”** in the Budget speech.

Budget announced a **Customs duty exemption** for import of capital goods and machinery required for manufacture of lithium-ion cells for batteries used in electric vehicles.

Rs 35,000 crore were allocated for **priority capital investments towards energy transition and net zero objectives, and energy security**.

What are examples of countries levying carbon border tax?

The European Union has recently agreed upon a carbon **border adjustment mechanism**. It would tax imports into the EU according to the amount of **carbon emitted** in their production.

Canada plans to introduce a similar levy, and the US is exploring its options.

26. [India's green hydrogen challenge](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's green hydrogen challenge**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

Relevance– Renewable sources of energy

News– On India's 75th Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the National Hydrogen Mission to make the country a production and export hub of green hydrogen.

What are some facts about the National Hydrogen Mission?

It has an initial outlay of Rs **19,744 crore over the next five years**. The target is **5 million metric tonnes production per annum** with an associated renewable energy capacity addition of about 125 GW by 2030.

It will lead to savings of **\$12.5 billion from fuel imports, averting 50 MMTs of annual emissions of Carbon dioxide, fresh investments of \$100 billion, and 6,00,000 green jobs**.

What are challenges in production and use of green hydrogen?

Electrolyser challenge: According to **IEA**, as of 2021 the **global manufacturing capacity** of electrolysers stands at 8 GW/year.

If India were to achieve its 2030 target, it would need **60-100 GW of electrolyser capacity**. It is almost 12 times the **current global production capacity**.

India currently has launched projects to **manufacture electrolysers**, but the actual numbers as of today are negligible.

Access to **critical minerals** such as nickel, platinum group metals and **rare earth metals** could hinder scaling up electrolyser manufacturing capability in India.

These resources are **concentrated in countries** such as China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Australia, Indonesia, South Africa, Chile and Peru. India also has **limited processing capabilities** in these minerals.

Energy source challenge: As per current estimates a completely **efficient electrolysis system** would require 39 kWh of electricity to produce 1 kg of hydrogen. Green hydrogen requires renewable energy as a source of electricity.

India currently estimates a capacity of **125 GW of renewable energy** to meet its green hydrogen 2030 targets. So far India has only achieved 119 GW of the 175 GW targeted capacity using solar, wind, bio-power and small hydro.

In addition to the generation capacity, the **transmission capacity for cross-border exchange** of power between states is a critical requirement.

End use challenge: Currently, most of the demand for hydrogen comes from the **chemical industry to produce ammonia** for fertilisers, **refining for hydrocracking and the desulphurisation of fuels**.

It can be a source of **heat for industries** such as steel, cement and aluminium production. It can be **used as fuel** for heavy duty vehicles, aviation and shipping.

The **conversion efficiency** from one form of energy carrier to another in the end use application will determine the scale of **green hydrogen's applicability**.

Hydrogen is a **highly combustible and volatile element**. Its potency in other forms such as ammonia or methanol is only relatively reduced.

It is critical to **establish safety standards for storage and transportation**. It will add to the cost of hydrogen as a fuel.

Endogenous resources challenge: In the case of India, approximately **50 billion litres of demineralised water supply** will be required for production of green hydrogen.

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Several parts of India are already **severely water-stressed**. So, solutions need to be found to cater to this additional water demand.

Desalination has been suggested. But, this will increase the **physical footprint of the required infrastructure**. It will lead to **more land use, impact biodiversity and create limitations in the location of electrolyzers**.

What is the way forward to overcome these challenges?

India needs to set up large scale manufacturing for electrolyzers, **building expertise and securing geo-political partnerships** for procurement of critical minerals. There is a need for improving the **overall technical and economic viability** of electrolyzers.

Proposed green hydrogen hubs will be required to **strike a fine balance** between availability of renewable energy and being close to hydrogen demand centres for economic feasibility.

India needs to add close to **100 GW of overall renewable energy capacity per year** over the next seven years and. **Dispatch corridors and mechanisms** should be made available..

[27. India must avoid growing into a dystopia](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India must avoid growing into a dystopia**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– The focus of economic growth has been on income generation. The development of masses is often neglected.

News– The focus of economic growth has been on income generation. The development of masses, rising inequalities and employment generation is neglected.

What is the economic scenario of India?

Private investment plans during the first nine months of this year to be over 50% greater than what they were a year ago.

India it seems is on a roll as far as economic growth is concerned.

India has overtaken the United Kingdom to become the **world’s fifth largest economy**.

The London Based consultancy **Centre for Economics And Business Research (CEBR)** predicted that by 2035, India’s economy would **reach \$10 trillion** and become the **world’s third largest by 2037**.

Why is the West interested in the growth of the Indian economy?

India is a democracy in the east and also the largest one in terms of population. All the countries in the **West are democracies**. So, they see a possible **alliance of interests**.

India’s growing economic size has made it attractive in a way that it was not before. Its fast growth is an **investment opportunity** for the surplus savings of the West. Investing money in India is likely to yield the **highest returns globally**.

What is the status of employment in India?

Government data show that in mid- 2022, unemployment among urban males was much higher than it was a decade ago.

Data from the **Centre For Monitoring Indian Economy** show that the number of people employed in December 2022 was less than it was in 2016.

Clearly, the **growth of the national economy** has not generated an equal growth in employment.

What are the impacts of growth on Environment?

Uncontrolled growth will almost certainly result in **ecological insecurity**.

The construction of new **elevated national highways** destroys agricultural land and jeopardising livelihoods.

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Plans for infrastructure aimed at religious tourism in Uttarakhand and Kerala have caused **landslides and flooding**. It led to suffering for their people.

What can be done to improve employment opportunities for the masses?

Employment opportunities for the mass population will arise only when there is **demand for goods in the production** of which they can participate.

Growth of the IT sector or of exportable manufactures will not be of much use for them. They possess low education and skills.

Increased demand for **goods of mass consumption** alone will lead to an expansion in the demand for these workers.

For an expansion of this demand, **low inflation** is essential. Only then will low-income households have enough to demand more manufactured goods.

A concerted policy focus can create the conditions for employment generation in India. Welfarism, defined by the free or subsidised distribution of private goods, is no substitute.

What is the way forward for economic policy?

India needs growth as it has a **backlog of poverty**. But growth alone is not enough for improving the lives of the poorest. It is ecologically harmful.

Size is valuable only when it **enhances the well being** of the population.

28. Unintended consequences – Subsidy on EVs must be revisited

Source: The post is based on the article “**Unintended consequences – Subsidy on EVs must be revisited**” published in the **Business Standard** on **10th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Subsidy on EVs.

News: Government subsidy provided for electric vehicles (EVs) under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme might have some unintended consequences.

Why government is providing Subsidy on EVs?

The government is subsidising EVs **a)** To help consumers make the transition of adoption of EVs, **b)** EVs will help reduce vehicular pollution in cities, **c)** The EVs will assist the government in containing the import of fuel, **d)** To improve external financial balance.

Read more: [Our unique EV transition is a leadership opportunity](#)

How do the Subsidy on EVs cause unintended consequences?

Market participants aim to maximise returns, But this profit maximisation is not always in line with the spirit of the rules designed by the state. This might hold true for EVs. Hence, EV subsidies cause unintended consequences. Such as,

a) Some electric two-wheeler manufacturers have been violating rules at different levels, **b)** Some firms were not following the localisation norms and depend on imports, presumably to contain costs, **c)** EV makers are also being probed for bypassing the price cap set by the government.

All this partly defeats the purpose of the EV subsidies, because it would not help develop an indigenous value chain to enable sustainable growth. Hence, the government has so far barred 17 manufacturers from the pool of 64 registered under the scheme.

How India can revamp the Subsidy on EVs that are causing unintended consequences?

At the micro level, the scheme will need to be redesigned. Such as **a)** Instead of capping the price, the government can give subsidies directly to the consumer, like direct benefit transfer, lower interest rates on loans for EVs, etc, **b)** The localisation condition can be monitored with better use of technology.

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[29. Girl in Gurgaon: Cases of abuse of domestic workers raise questions about informal employment sector](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Girl in Gurgaon: Cases of abuse of domestic workers raise questions about informal employment sector**” published in the **Live Mint** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Employment.

Relevance: Concerns associated with domestic work.

News: Recently, a Gurgaon-based couple was booked for allegedly assaulting and torturing a minor girl who worked for them as a domestic help. An FIR has been registered under sections of the **Indian Penal Code**, the [Juvenile Justice Act](#) and the [Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act](#).

About Domestic work in India

Domestic work in India serves as a major and growing employment avenue, especially for uneducated and unskilled workers from rural areas as well as the urban poor.

According to the government’s [e-Shram portal](#), a national database of unorganised workers, almost 10% of the workers registered are engaged as domestic and household workers.

Over the years, there has been a growth in the number of private agencies that act as a conduit between the demand and supply ends of the market. Employment in this category tends to be dominated by women, with most of them being migrants.

As urbanisation increases, the nuclearisation of families rises, and the pressures on families of old-age care increase the demand for domestic care work is only likely to escalate.

What is the bigger concern associated with domestic work?

The recent issue highlights **a)** the nature and form of informal employment relationships in India and **b)** the unequal power equations between the employers and employees that underlie them. The other challenges faced by domestic workers include **a)** the work often involves long hours, **b)** the wages in these occupations in urban areas, especially in the major metropolitan centres, may be higher than in rural areas, **c)** the implementation of minimum wage rules remains an unaddressed issue across the country, **d)** these workers have little bargaining power, **e)** they have little access to social protection and are at times subject to harassment and abuse and **f)** low state capacity led to implementation issues on the ground.

Though the involvement of private agencies indicates some sort of push towards the formalisation of domestic workers. Their functioning remains mostly informal in nature. Most of them fail to provide any form of support, financial or otherwise, to these girls and women.

What should be done to address the concerns associated with domestic work?

There is a need to **address the power imbalance and provide greater protection** for domestic workers. The government should also **retain a degree of flexibility in work structures**.

The government should also ensure **detailed documentation and greater transparency in work contracts**, along with **stricter enforcement of rules and regulations**.

[30. India’s law and order matrix needs a reboot](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India’s law and order matrix needs a reboot**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance– Reform in police force

News– The annual All India Conference of Directors General/Inspectors General of Police which was held recently.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February [Second Week] 2023

What are issues related to the conference of DGPs?

There is a **proliferation of subjects** up for discussion in recent conferences, and the **presence of increasing numbers of delegates** to cover the various subjects. It leaves little scope for any in-depth discussion.

Today's security threats have an **all-embracing character**. There is a need for in-depth discussions on **futuristic themes in policing**, such as cyber-crime, the dark web, and unchecked social media.

These are in addition to subjects such as left-wing extremism, counter-terrorism, drug tracking and border issues.

Lack of adequate time to discuss these matters in detail undermine the quality of the debates and possible outcomes.

Hence, decision making in these circumstances needs **fundamental changes**. There is a need for **more purposeful discussion** at higher levels.

What are the issues faced by police forces in modern times?

Law and order management today has not been given sufficient attention. This subject may appear redundant in a world dominated by technology.

It demands a **combination of newer skills, in both technology and crowd management**. These are not available among security agencies.

The attention of most security forces in the country has essentially been devoted to ongoing threats such as terrorism.

A **heavy-handed approach** to deal with crowds creates more problems. This only leads to division between law enforcement agencies and the public.

Police forces have not spent enough attention to **selection of personnel** to security agencies. **'Open-Source intelligence'** is often neglected by security agencies. The proper utilisation of it can become the critical factor in managing many law and order situations today.

There is a presence of **multiple security agencies**, including intelligence and investigative agencies. They seldom act with a common purpose.

Their **techniques and methodologies tend** to be different. It leads to **contradictions in approach**. They often **hinder proper analysis and investigation**.

What is the way forward for reform in the police force?

There is a need to bring about changes in intelligence techniques, investigative methodologies, and improving the ground situation.

Decision making in changed circumstances of the 21st century needs to undergo fundamental changes. There is a need for more purposeful discussion at higher levels.

Annual conferences of DGPs/IGPs can be split into two separate conferences. **A higher-level conference of DGPs/IGPs** should discuss **policy related issues**. **A separate conference** should be held of intelligence and security specialists to discuss the **methodology, techniques and acquisition of new skills** for current and future problems.

In the 21st century, security problems will grow at an **exponential rate**. The emerging challenges would require **greater innovativeness and agility**.

A **new set of cognitive skills** will be needed to meet the challenges posed by **swift technological change and the rise of data war**.

Managing today's angry, and unruly mobs requires a **fresh set of skills and inherent abilities**, apart from technology.

Police and security agencies must be provided with the **right attributes**. They need to be **adequately trained**. This needs a **top-down approach** due to considerable competition of resources within the agencies for other items such weaponry and technology.

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The **selection of personnel** to security agencies, especially the police will require a total makeover.

The police forces must be capable of dealing with **modern criminals**. They often employ a **variety of tactics and skills**. Police and security forces must develop a **different mind-set**. Force cannot be the answer to every situation.



General

Studies

Paper – 4

General Studies - 4

1. [India must become a knowledge republic as it charts its way ahead](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India must become a knowledge republic as it charts its way ahead**” published in the **Live Mint** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 4 – Strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance

Relevance: India as a knowledge republic.

News: Recently, a prominent NRI has said that India should work on ways to become a knowledge republic.

What is a knowledge republic?

Knowledge has a crucial role in building India’s republic. It represents India’s collective desire to learn and apply that learning, the ability to learn and create systems of learning, and the know-how Indians have gathered as a civilization.

The knowledge republic must comprise knowledge in economy, society, and even in diplomacy. Becoming a knowledge republic is a worthy choice as a unified objective of nationhood, especially for India.

Why India is still at crossroads in building a knowledge republic?

Right after the Independence, the environment of resource constraints and weak economic growth kept India from becoming a knowledge republic. At that time India has been busy with setting priorities in order.

Eventually, India has come out of those traps and has expressed itself globally as a leading nation.

Why it is time for India to become a knowledge republic?

India’s young demographic profile: India still has undisputed strength that will continue at least in the foreseeable future.

The paradox at the global level: The world at present is facing **a)** ecological crises in times of improved living standards, **b)** rising inequality in times of large wealth creation, **c)** depression and loneliness in times of a growing population, and **d)** humans losing to machines in times of rapid innovation.

In this paradoxical nature of modern development, India has emerged on the world stage as a responsible power and trustworthy partner. It can lead global efforts in fundamental thinking for problem-solving.

India’s civilizational heritage: Indian civilisation always revered knowledge. For instance, India’s richness of languages, the vastness of scriptures, the lore of ancient universities and the living tradition of rishis are testimony to the nation’s respect for knowledge.

Even now, there is a special place for teachers, gurus and knowledgeable people in the Indian heart. Typical Indian parents see education as a ticket to professional success and save significantly to support their children’s studies.

What should be done to make India as a knowledge republic?

Make the domestic environment competitive: The government has to **double the investment in youth talent** through education, strengthen avenues for research and innovation, and continue policy reforms that lead to its gainful occupation, including entrepreneurship. This will also showcase India’s talent to global markets.

Inculcate knowledge in governance: Indian society’s reverence for knowledge should be acknowledged and leveraged in policymaking and nation-building.

Worship of knowledge can pave the way for a modern republic. It is time for India to choose that path and move ahead.