



9 PM

Compilation

23rd to 28th January 2023

9 PM Compilation for the Month of January [Fourth Week] 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. [A 'Holocaust education' for India to create a just present](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “A ‘Holocaust education’ for India to create a just present” published in **The Hindu** on **27th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – World History

Relevance: learnings from the Holocaust

News: 27th January is remembered as **International Holocaust Remembrance Day**. Six million Jews were murdered by Nazi-Germany in the Holocaust.

What can we learn from the Holocaust?

The Holocaust gives us the message that there is a **need to respect human rights, have patience and respect others** from different societies, race, sex, etc.

It is an example of the consequences of hate crimes and antisemitism that made their way into the mainstream. **Antisemitism becomes more dangerous** when used for power-related purposes or during crisis and uncertainty.

Today, the **world is struggling with inequality**, intolerance, and injustice in many places. **Economic, cultural, religious and ethnic** issues lead to division, hate crimes and violence in many parts of the globe.

Moreover, there has also been an increase in the number of antisemitic incidents against Jews all around the world.

Therefore, **education about the Holocaust is necessary** to understand the factors that led to the eradication of human rights and democratic values.

It can also help to understand circumstances that can cause increase in hate speech, violence, and even mass killing.

With this view, **UNESCO has the initiative** known as the International Program on Holocaust and Genocide Education (**IPHGE**). It is a step in the direction of fostering reparative justice.

The programme teaches the youth values, prepare them to address future challenges such as critical thinking, empathy, tolerance, and respect for human rights.

How does India view the Holocaust?

The Holocaust in India is **just a historical event** and India has not been able to connect emotionally with the event.

Therefore, it is necessary to educate the youth all around the world including India about the Holocaust to help them to analyse the past injustices and create a just present.

General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. [A reminder of the flaws in India's urbanisation policies](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A reminder of the flaws in India's urbanisation policies**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Urbanisation, their problems and their remedies

Relevance– Issues related to urban finance and urban governance

News– The article explains the scenario of urban finance in India. It provides solutions to problem faced by urban governance in India

What is the scenario of urban finance in India?

Urban finance predominantly comes from the government. 48%, 24% and 15% of urban capital expenditure needs are derived from the central, State, and city governments, respectively.

Public-private partnership projects contribute 3% and commercial debt 2%.

Various reports have estimated a huge demand for funding urban infrastructure. The **Isher Judge Ahluwalia report** says that by 2030, nearly ₹39.2 lakh crore would be required. A **McKinsey report on urbanisation** has a figure of \$1.2 trillion, or ₹90 lakh crore.

What are some points contained in the World Bank report on urbanisation in India?

It estimates that nearly ₹70 lakh crore would be needed for investment in urban India to meet the growing demands of the population.

It suggests **improving the fiscal base and creditworthiness** of the Indian cities. Cities must institute a **buoyant revenue base**. They must be able to recover the cost of providing its services.

This report points out that nearly 85% of government revenue is from the cities.

Its emphasis is on the levying of more burdens in the form of user charges on utilities, etc.

It focuses on **private investments**

State-level management of urban water and sewerage functions may be devolved in a time-bound manner.

An improved **urban legal framework** that includes a stable and certain **fiscal transfer regime, accords financial powers** to ULBs will determine the future of cities.

What are issues with urbanisation in India?

The basic problem with the reports on urbanisation in India is that they are made using a **top to bottom approach**. They have too much of a focus on technocentric **solutions using very high capital-intensive technologies**.

Cities primarily are run by **parastatals**. The city governments hardly have any role to play in the smooth functioning of such parastatals.

What is the way forward for improving the situation of the Indian urban ecosystem?

Plans must be **made from below** by engaging with the people and identifying their needs.

Empowering the city governments and the people at large is the need of the day.

The **national task force to review the 74th Constitutional Amendment by K.C. Sivaramakrishnan** provides many suggestions. It asks for empowering the people, transferring subjects to the city governments.

It suggests that 10% of the income-tax collected from cities be given back to them and ensuring that this **corpus fund** was utilised only for infrastructure building.

There is a need to improve urban governance. Regular elections should be held in cities and there must be empowerment through the transferring of the **three Fs: finances, functions, and functionaries**.

2. Aspirational Blocks Programme: Building blocks of Viksit Bharat

Source– The post is based on the article “**Aspirational Blocks Programme: Building blocks of Viksit Bharat**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance– Government schemes for development of backward areas.

News– The article explains the recently launched Aspirational Block Programme. It also explains some successful outcomes of the Aspirational District Programme.

What is the Aspirational Blocks Programme and how will it be implemented?

This programme focuses on **improving governance**. The objective is to enhance the **quality of life of citizens** in the underdeveloped blocks of India.

This will be done by **converging existing schemes, defining outcomes, and monitoring them** on a constant basis.

The ABP is built on the success of the government’s flagship **Aspirational Districts Programme**. An **inter-ministerial committee** in consultation with states had identified **500 blocks** from across 28 states and four Union territories.

ABP will focus on monitoring **15 key socio-economic indicators categorised under major sectors**. These sectors are health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development, basic infrastructure and social development.

States having the **flexibility to include additional state-specific socio-economic indicators** to address local challenges.

The indicators will be **tracked on a real-time basis** and **periodic rankings** will be released across key thematic areas.

What is the role of blocks for development?

The focus on blocks shows the **historic importance** of blocks introduced in 1952 for developmental goals.

Development locks ensure that a larger than **proportionate share of development** reaches the **marginalised and vulnerable sections** of the population by building **social and economic infrastructure**.

It ensures that a “**one-size-fits-all**” **approach** is not applied to every part of the country. The block administration can adopt **customised approaches** based on the context of the region and the most emergent needs.

This method also brings the **decision-making process** closer to the grassroots.

How has the Aspirational District Programme been successful?

The ADP has shown that if development is taken as a “**Jan Andolan**” and progress of a district is **constantly monitored**, success would follow.

In the last five years, many aspirational districts have bettered their performance, across several indicators, than the state average values.

For example, **Paschimi Singhum**, a district in Jharkhand has raised registration of pregnant women within the first trimester from just 39% in 2018 to 91% in 2022.

Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir has increased the percentage of secondary schools with **functional electricity** from less than 50% in 2018 to more than 95% in 2022.

There are other success stories like deploying self help groups in **rural Ranchi** to promote **financial inclusion and financial literacy** using UPI and BHIM apps.

In **rural Osmanabad in Maharashtra**, court services were completely digitised to improve **speed and access to justice**.

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The Finance Minister in her **2022 Union Budget speech** mentioned that **95% of 112 aspirational districts** have made significant progress in major indicators such as health, nutrition, financial inclusion, and skill development.

What are the main achievements sought by the Aspirational Block Programme?

Some blocks under ADP continue to under-perform. The reasons can be **difficult terrain, lack of resources, historical injustice, social marginalisation and community vulnerability**.

The ABP aims to address these inequalities by **improving governance and last mile service delivery** at the block level.

Several line departments of the block administration will **converge and work in unison** to bridge critical administrative gaps. T

This **holistic development** will lead to economic development. This will also aid the achievement of critical targets identified under SDGs.

The programme strives to **protect the rights and uphold the dignity** of every single citizen. It will achieve it by **increasing their awareness and enhancing access** to government schemes.

It also provides a **common platform** for all block administrations to **showcase their best practices and learnings**.

This **forward-looking programme** will leverage the **three Cs of convergence, collaboration, and competition** to achieve this vision.

3. [Necessary pushback – The Centre should stop seeing judicial appointments as rewards for loyalists](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Necessary pushback – The Centre should stop seeing judicial appointments as rewards for loyalists**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

Relevance: About the process of appointing judges.

News: The Supreme Court collegium has pushed back against the Union government’s attempts to block the appointment of some advocates as High Court judges.

Read more: [MoP for the appointment of judges: Law Minister’s suggestion to CJI on appointment of judges: The context and background, explained](#)

What is the collegium?

Read Here: [Explained | The workings of the Supreme Court collegium](#)

What are the three Judge’s Cases?

Must read: [The Collegium System – Explained Pointwise](#)

What should be done?

Read more: [Check, do not cross – Government should work towards systemic reform; not attack the judiciary](#)

4. [No Entry, No Deal – Without more visas, UK FTA makes little sense for India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**No Entry, No Deal – Without more visas, UK FTA makes little sense for India**” published in **The Times of India** on **23rd January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the process of visa liberalisation.

News: Recently, the UK international trade secretary pointed out that the country left the EU because it does not believe in the free movement of people. Further, visa liberalisation under the proposed India-UK FTA is also not up for negotiation. This poses challenges to the India-UK FTA.

Why visa liberalisation is essential for India-UK trade?

-The two-way trade between India-UK in 2021-22 was \$17.5 billion, lower than India's trade with Germany or with Belgium. India's overall merchandise trade with the UK was less than 2%. Free movement of skilled labour and students between India and the UK could have provided an incentive to quicken the pace of negotiations.

-Access to India's huge market appears to be the UK's primary incentive for UK. An FTA which lowers tariffs for British exporters helps the UK.

But with UK tariffs already low, India can gain only from visa liberalisation.

Must read: [India – UK Free Trade Agreement \(FTA\) | Timeline](#)

What needs to be done to facilitate India-UK FTA?

FTAs require tradeoffs. Some domestic interests have to be set aside in the pursuit of larger gains from lowering barriers to trade. Similarly, the UK have to revisit its visa liberalisation policy.

What India should do?

The UK and Australia already have a regime of unfettered movement for young people, including job seekers. Against this backdrop, India should work on other potential FTAs like the ones with the EU and US as gains from these FTAs are far greater than anything on offer by the UK.

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

5. [Kerala announces menstrual leave: Time to talk period](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Kerala announces menstrual leave: Time to talk period” published in **The Indian Express** on 24th January 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice

Relevance: menstrual leave for women and associated concerns

News: Kerala government has announced that it will grant menstrual leave for female students in all state universities under the Department of Higher Education. This announcement is a positive step towards a gender-just society.

How menstrual leave would benefit women and what are the concerns associated with it?

Benefits: It is an important step towards acknowledging and addressing the pain and discomfort faced by women.

Period leave would help create workplaces and classrooms that are more inclusive and more accommodating.

Concerns: Menstruation in India is a taboo topic. Therefore, it is possible that a special period leave could become a source for discrimination.

South Korea and Japan have laws granting period leave but recent surveys showed a decline in the number of women availing it due to the social stigma against menstruation. This could also be in India.

Further, there is risk of medicalising a normal biological process which could further lead to biases against women.

Moreover, there are also possibilities that **employers may be reluctant to hire women** due to the extra leave granted to them.

How have various governments recognised menstrual leave and what are the challenges?

The government has tried to come up with menstrual laws and schemes for women.

For example, Bihar introduced period leave for working women in 1992. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's **Menstrual Hygiene Scheme** seeks to increase access to sanitary napkins for adolescent girls in rural areas.

However, bringing laws on menstruation still **remains a challenge**.

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The **Menstruation Benefits Bill** was first introduced in Parliament in 2017 and then in the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly in 2022.

However, the bill was **withdrawn from the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly** because the subject was deemed unsuitable for discussion in the Assembly.

Therefore, such issues and obstacles will bring difficulties in recognising the goals of **gender justice and equality**.

6. [India needs to use its fiscal armoury to fight inequality](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India needs to use its fiscal armoury to fight inequality**” published in the **mint** on **24th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues relating to poverty. GS3- Inclusive growth

Relevance– Inequality and related issues

News– The article explains the recent report of Oxfam about increasing inequality in India. It also provide some facts about inequality and suggest solution to reduce inequality in India

What are arguments favouring Oxfam report conclusion about increasing inequality in India?

Tax burden on the poor is not only through indirect taxes but also through **inflationary impact** of higher excise duty on petrol and diesel.

Average inflation has been above 6% for three years. For items like milk, flour and eggs, it is higher. It is running ahead of the rise in wages.

Oxfam says that worldwide 1.7 billion workers have seen **wages eroded by sharp rise in inflation**. It has made them relatively more poor.

The **World Bank 2022 Poverty and Shared prosperity** says that by the end of 2022, more than 70 million people slipped below the poverty line. A bulk of them are in India.

There has been **no official poverty count** for the last 11 years due to lack of consumer expenditure data. A NITI Aayog report using **multi-dimensional index** shows an average of double digit poverty.

Mercedes clocked a record growth of 41% during 2022. Demand for luxury goods has been booming in recent years.

What are some facts about inequality?

Inequality is an **inevitable consequence** of faster economic growth. Risk taking entrepreneurs create wealth and make **disproportionate gains**. Those left behind may benefit from **trickle down**.

But, if trickle down does not happen, it leads to **stagnating income** for the majority.

Extreme inequality leads to **social tensions**. It is **detrimental to growth**.

What is the way forward to reduce inequalities?

Monetary policy is not very useful. Loose monetary policy during Covid made inequality worse. Soaring stock markets due to infusion of central bank liquidity benefits those who invested in stocks. It is less than 3% of the population.

Fiscal policy is necessary to address the inequalities. It can be done by **redistributive taxation or by more spending on public goods**.

There must be focus on **survival of MSMEs** where most of the job creation happens. Outstanding payments due to MSMEs are nearly 10 million dollars. **TReDS** is a platform to sell the outstanding bills of small businesses. But, it is not working.

Fiscal action is needed for **skill generation** for school dropouts due to pandemic.

Higher expenditure is needed on **health, education and infrastructure**. It needs **higher taxation on the rich**.

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There is a need to reduce the **burden of indirect taxes** and increase the **share of direct taxes**.

7. [Democracy and its structural slippages](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Democracy and its structural slippages**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance– Democracy in modern times

News– The article explains the features of modern and concept of equality. It also explains whether elections are truly free and fair.

What are some features of modern forms of democracy?

The democracy that is functional around the world today was essentially a **19th century to 20th century western creation**. The institution of **universal adult franchise and governance through regular and multi-party elections** is at most a 100 years or less phenomena. In Britain, women obtained the right to vote in the 1930s, in France in 1944.

Basic to democracy is the **devolution of power**. It is based on the **premise of the individual and equality**. There has been **near-universal abolition of monarchies and hereditary aristocracies** and their replacement by **governance through popular mandate**.

The spread of economic resources, infrastructure, education, health to the masses, with some shortcomings shows the **effectiveness of devolution** in practice.

There is an unbreakable link between the **development of devolution and capitalism**. Capitalism’s basic requirement is **freedom for resources** such as land, labour. So, the notions of the **individual’s rights and equality** evolved. It culminates in the **notion of a free market for every kind of resource mobilisation**, including labour.

What are some facts about equality?

Human history has witnessed several experiences of equality. It is mostly in its **religious form** like, **non-theistic Buddhism**. **Monotheistic religions** such as Christianity and Sikhism were proponents of **social equality**. However, equality demands the **subjugation of the individual to the community**.

It is notable that **no egalitarian ideology** has ever been able to create an egalitarian society. These ideologies **reshuffle existing social hierarchies** and create some space for the upward movement of the lower rungs. It seeks to establish **uniformity** through the same or similar institutions and practices.

The uniformity takes the form of **periodic multi-party “free and fair” elections** and guarantees of various kinds of freedoms.

Are elections truly free and fair?

Elections divide voters into a **dubious majority and a minority**. The **majority-minority division** is hardly a **decisive mandate**. There is hardly a government anywhere in the world that governs through a majority of the mandate.

Usually, 30% to 40% of the votes give a **comfortable majority**. This is structured into **multi-party elections through “the first past the post” principle**.

In practice, voting by individuals is still conditioned by **numerous demands of family, community, religion, culture**. It is also conditioned by the **political alternatives** offered by political parties. A loss of individuality is implicated here.

The individual does not create the **choices**. These are given by parties and often wrapped in **false propaganda** and even more false promises. The individual has the “freedom” to choose between these choices.

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The complete equation of democracy with electoral politics draws one's attention away from any **alternative form of governance**.

What is the scenario of India?

Democratic politics has been impacted by **identity politics** of caste, sub-caste, community, region, language.

Nehru had hoped that education and the experience of democracy would generate a more **"modern" consciousness among the masses**. The very **success of political mobilisations** has **reinforced identities** instead of weakening them.

8. [New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern's resignation spotlights the hard choices that women in politics often face](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern's resignation spotlights the hard choices that women in politics often face"** published in **The Indian Express** on **24th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance– Women in politics

News– The article explains the challenges faced by women in politics.

What are the issues faced by women in politics all over the world?

Women leaders, even in some of the most developed countries, find it difficult to break the **glass ceiling** to the top post. If women manage to lead, they find it incredibly hard to **sustain campaigns** in **male-dominated** politics and societies.

Last year, in Finland PM Sanna Marin was trolled, vilified and mocked. She was forced to undergo a **drug test** after photos of her hosting a party at her home went viral on social media. In comparison, there were muted reactions to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson partying during the Covid lockdown.

The **choices for women leaders** are often seen in **binary terms**, between their personal lives and professional aspirations. There are very few women who were not forced to make a choice and balance the two. The women who manage to strike a balance are often referred to as **"superwoman"**.

When women secure **high political office**, it is often considered the result of a pathway laid by fathers, husbands or other male figures in the family.

What is the scenario of India?

India has had two women presidents and a prime minister. But, there is still a lack of **equal representation of women** in positions of power.

The **representation of women in Parliament and assemblies** is dismal. The **dropout rate of women workers** in political organisations is alarming.

Women politicians have neither an **understanding society**, nor the **support mechanism** that would encourage them to view politics as a career. They do not get the required support to help them balance family responsibilities and work.

Financial constraints and career uncertainties are other reasons for women choosing to drop out of political spaces.

What is the way forward for women in politics?

Women should not feel constrained to make a **choice between personal and professional lives**. There is a need to create a **social environment conducive to mental health priorities**.

The need for a temporary break for attaining personal goals should not translate into a **disruption in careers** for women leaders.

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We need to evolve as a society, where **pursuit of success** should not be seen in **binary choices of personal and professional responsibilities**.

9. [An India chapter for foreign universities](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**An India chapter for foreign universities**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About foreign universities in India.

News: Recently University Grants Commission (UGC) announced draft regulations for foreign universities setting up campuses in India.

What are the key provisions of UGC’s draft regulations?

Read here: [UGC unveils draft norms to allow foreign universities to set up campuses in India](#)

What are the advantages of UGC’s draft regulations?

Read here: [Indian campuses of foreign universities are a win-win for students and institute](#)

What are the challenges associated with UGC’s draft regulations?

Not address the students concern: Students do not go abroad for degrees alone; they go for the experience, post-study work visas, income opportunities and better career prospects. Studying in a foreign university in India would offer them none of these.

Read here: [UGC guidelines on foreign universities: The University Gimmicks Commission](#)

What are the contradictory provisions associated with UGC’s draft regulations?

-The regulation demands that the quality of education imparted by these institutions in India must be on a par with the quality of courses at their campus in the country of origin. Yet, it insists that they must not “offer any such programme of study which jeopardises the national interest of India or the standards of higher education in India”.

-It promises academic, administrative and financial autonomy to foreign institutions but takes that away by asserting that they should abide by all the conditions that the UGC and the Indian government prescribe from time to time.

What should be done?

Must read: [Establishing Campuses of Foreign Universities in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

10. [Endorsement disclosure – Fine violators, do not jail them](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Endorsement disclosures – Fine violators, do not jail them**” published in **Business Standard** on **24th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About guidelines for social-media influencers and celebrities.

News: Recently, the government issued guidelines for social-media influencers and celebrities.

About the endorsement guidelines for social-media influencers and celebrities

Read more: [Centre releases endorsement guidelines for Celebs and Social Media Influencers](#)

What is the need for guidelines for social-media influencers and celebrities?

Disclosures are important particularly in the case of social media because it’s relatively easy to distinguish an advertisement from other content on other mediums, such as television.

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What are the concerns associated with the guidelines for social-media influencers and celebrities?

Punishment for violation is too harsh: For instance, influencers could be fined up to Rs 10 lakh, and for repeated offences, the fine can go up to Rs 50 lakh. Violations can also lead to influencers getting debarred and jailed for six months, extending up to two years.

The jail term for such an offence as a violation of endorsement disclosure rules seems contrary to the government's broader effort to decriminalise economic offences. Further, as a 2022 study showed, stringent rules have not stopped misleading advertisements.

Not easy to identify compensation: The connection with advertisers may include monetary or non-monetary compensation, media barter, trips or hotel stay, discounts, gifts, and so on. But, such disclosures are not easy for the audience to recognise. Further, they may not unduly influence their opinion and decision-making.

The government does not have the capacity to enforce: The government would need the significant capacity to oversee a large number of influencers.

The government needs a balance between the state's capacity and the laws.

11. [Open IIT Gates – More women are taking a crack at the JEE. Good, because this gender disparity was glaring](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Open IIT Gates – More women are taking a crack at the JEE. Good, because this gender disparity was glaring**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About women students in STEM.

News: Girls routinely outperform boys in boards and medical entrance. But in JEE, the results have long highlighted glaring gendered disparity. For the first time this year, women make up 30% of the IIT-JEE applicant pool.

About women students in STEM?

In India, women make up 43% of the STEM education pool, one of the highest ratios in the world. However, there are a few shortcomings. Such as **a)** Lack of interest in scientific and technical education, **b)** Implicit biases and the lack of role models for women in the field of STEM, **c)** The JEE exam usually requires years of intensive coaching in faraway locations, and **d)** Students from rural and lower-income backgrounds also do not pursue JEE.

How does the government is improving women students in STEM?

The government has made active interventions to spark girls' interest in STEM studies. Such as **a)** There is a horizontal 'supernumerary' quota in IITs. This gives women who have passed the JEE Advanced an edge in courses of their choice and has improved the presence of women to 20% on IIT campuses, **b)** Institutions are assessed for their gender inclusion.

IITs must make sure that disparities don't come in the way of talent.

12. [Rock The Jailhouse – Too many Indians are locked up under dozens of obsolete laws. Legal reform must precede prison reform](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Rock The Jailhouse – Too many Indians are locked up under dozens of obsolete laws. Legal reform must precede prison reform**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About jail management.

News: Recently, the Prime Minister has called for repealing obsolete criminal laws and prison reforms to improve jail management.

What is the challenge in jail management?

India’s jails are horribly overcrowded. Almost 77% of India’s 5.54 lakh prisoners are undertrials. In other words, three of four inmates have not even been convicted. As many as 11,490 prisoners had spent more than five years in jail without a conviction.

NCRB’s prison statistics for 2021 showed that the occupancy rate was 130%, a 12-percentage-point increase over the previous year. In two states, Uttarakhand and UP, the occupancy rate was as high as 185%.

How do obsolete and irrational criminal laws hamper jail management?

a) Over 10% of the prison population in 2021 were undertrials for rape and dowry deaths. Both are heinous crimes that should lead to severe punishment. However, sexual assault laws do not differentiate between rape and false promises of marriage, **b)** Anti-dowry laws are framed in such a way that police can arrest multiple people for one crime, **c)** About 25% of undertrials in 2021 were imprisoned under special and local laws – for crimes falling under the umbrella of liquor and narcotics. **d)** Prohibition laws are irrational and often lead to poorer citizens being jailed for long periods as India’s legal aid system is dysfunctional, and **e)** Section 292 of IPC (to deal with obscenity) and sedition law both introduced during the British Raj, were still in use.

Read more: [About Prison reforms: What numbers don’t tell us](#)

What needs to be done to improve jail management?

There are far too many unnecessary provisions in criminal laws that deprive many citizens of liberty. They need to be repealed. Both the political executive at the Centre and in states should initiate these changes.

13. [Developing schools without barriers](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Developing schools without barriers**” published in **The Hindu** on **25th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable action of the population

Relevance– Issue related to disabled children

News– The article explains the challenges faced by disabled children. It also explains various **national and international initiatives** that provide educational access to disabled children. It also suggests some solutions for providing **more educational access** to these children.

What are the challenges faced by children with disabilities?

A **UNESCO 2019 report** mentioned that children with disabilities comprise 1.7% of the total child population in India. They are faced with **physical, institutional, socioeconomic and communication barriers** from an early age.

As per the report, **more than 70% of five-year-olds** with disabilities in India have never attended any educational institution.

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Several barriers impede the participation of CWD in accessing educational opportunities. These are **inaccessible school buses; inaccessible facilities in schools** like drinking water facilities, canteens and toilets.

There is **inappropriate infrastructure** in classrooms like uncomfortable seating, slippery flooring and low illumination.

Misinformed attitudes and perceptions among parents, teachers, staff, and communities influences the child's emotional development.

There is a lack of **teaching and learning practices** that integrate inclusive technologies and digital equipment to engage the child.

What are the constitutional provisions, government intervention and international instruments that promote education for disabled children?

Article 21A of the Constitution and the **Right to Education Act, 2009** outline the fundamental right to education and the **right to have free and compulsory education for children aged 6-14 years**.

The **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan** has adopted a '**zero rejection policy**'. It emphasises that every child with special needs is provided quality education.

India has ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. The government launched the **Accessible India Campaign in 2015**. An important pillar of this campaign is **accessibility to the built environment**.

What is the way forward to increase the educational opportunities for children with disabilities?

There is a need to develop **inclusive and accessible schools**. They will not challenge **perceptions** about children with disabilities and the associated discrimination. It will also help in actualising the **zero-rejection policy** in schools.

A **multi-pronged participatory approach** for providing an **enabling environment for the empowerment** of future citizens is needed. It will ensure that **stakeholders** in the school ecosystem collectively work towards promoting **accessibility and inclusion** in schools.

It includes **awareness and sensitisation programmes** for children, parents, and caregivers. Trainers are needed for **upskilling** of school faculty and special educators and providing **access to updated teaching toolkits and materials**.

It is required to provide **technical training** to local government departments; and a **co-learning platform for knowledge-sharing** between all.

Five principles of **equitability, usability and durability, affordability, cultural adaptability, and aesthetic appeal** are of special importance. It should be embedded from the **planning to implementation to evaluation stages** of providing infrastructure services in schools.

[14. Working hand in hand to showcase India](#)

Source– The post is based on the article "**Working hand in hand to showcase India**" published in **The Hindu** on **25th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance– Tourism sector

News– The article explains the steps taken by the Ministry of Tourism to promote coordination among various ministries. It also explains the draft tourism policy 2022 and tourism potential of our country.

The Ministry of Tourism has declared "**Visit India Year 2023**" for promoting various tourism products and destinations to increase India's share in the **global tourism market**.

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How is the Ministry of tourism prompting coordination between different ministries to boost tourism in the country?

Over the last eight years, the Ministry of Tourism has prioritised the task of **inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination**. It is **breaking down silos**.

Today, the Ministry of Tourism coordinates its work effectively with over 20 central government Ministries in the **promotion and the development** of tourism in the country.

In October 2022, the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Home Affairs organised the **National Conference on Tourist Policy** Aimed at working with the police and **sensitising** them on addressing the needs of foreign and domestic tourists.

In partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Tourism Ministry has begun establishing **'Yuva Tourism' clubs** to nurture young ambassadors of Indian tourism.

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways is aiming to make India an **attractive cruise tourism destination** using **state-of-the-art infrastructure**.

In partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs, tourism officers have been placed in **20 Indian missions** in countries that contribute to some of the highest foreign tourist arrivals in India. Their role includes facilitating and providing inputs for **country-specific sensibilities** and having them reflected in tourism products.

Steps are being taken in collaboration with the Ministry of Roadways and the Petroleum Ministry to ensure that highways and fuel stations have **clean sanitation infrastructure**.

The Ministry of Tourism is also **funding several commercial flight routes** in partnership with the Ministry of Civil Aviation to make them viable.

What are some facts about the new draft National Tourism Policy 2022?

It aims to formalise the **work coordination through structures and institutions**.

The policy has been formulated after **situational analysis** including the impact of COVID-19. It takes into account future projections for the tourism sector with a **vision for India@100**.

One of the ideas includes an **institutional structure** that can take **concurrent and coordinated action** across the Union, State and local government levels in partnership with industry.

What is the tourism potential of India?

Data show that domestic tourism has recovered to **pre-pandemic levels**. This is evident in a record 1.84 crore domestic tourists visiting Jammu and Kashmir in 2022. Similarly, foreign tourist arrivals are expected to reach pre-pandemic levels.

India has always been a popular destination for travellers exploring **spiritual enlightenment and self-discovery**.

For centuries **many great foreign travellers** have visited India and shared their experiences in the form of memoirs, travelogues, poetry and books. Some of them are Megasthenes, Hiuen-Tsang, Marco Polo.

India is the birthplace to **four major world religions**– Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism.

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[15. Conference of top cops, attended by PM Narendra Modi, must not ignore basic policing problems](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Conference of top cops, attended by PM Narendra Modi, must not ignore basic policing problems**” published in **The Indian Express** on **25th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: concerns associated with the Indian police system

News: The Indian police system has lots of concerns but these concerns are not often discussed at the conference of the Directors General of Police of all the states and union territories held recently.

What are the concerns with the Indian police system?

The conference of the Directors General of Police of all the states and union territories is held every year but it ignores the problem present in the Indian policy at grass roots level.

For example, the **average police station** in India presents a dismal picture such as case property like motorcycles and cars littered all over the compound, no reception room, filthy lockup, etc.

The staff are overworked, fatigued, generally unresponsive, and with little resources.

According to the **Status of Policing in India Report 2019**, police in India work at 77 percent of their sanctioned strength and work for 14 hours a day on average.

There are 70 police stations which have no wireless, 214 police stations that have no telephone and 240 police stations that have no vehicles.

Police personnel usually get unsatisfactory housing facilities, their training is not as per the recent emerging threats.

Further, it is estimated that since Independence, 36,044 police personnel have died in the performance of their duties. This signifies that **the police duties in India are tougher than in any other part of the world**.

What measures are required to improve the functioning of Indian police?

First, the police station must be reinforced with upgradation of its infrastructure, better transport, communication and forensic facilities.

Second, the **format of the annual conference of all DGPs** should be changed. The conference should be **divided into two parts**, one dealing with **intelligence matters** and the other dealing with **crime and law and order issues**. It is necessary because crime is increasingly becoming more complex and requires specialized treatment.

Third, the concept of **SMART police** should be achieved in order bring the change in in the working of the police.

[16. The new and dark interpretations of ‘We the People’](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The new and dark interpretations of ‘We the People’**” published in **The Hindu** on **25th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance– Working of institutions in Indian democracy

News– The article explains the recent speech by the Vice-President about separation of powers. It tells about the features of democracy in the US and Britain. It explains the conventions followed in democracy and onslaught on institutions by the current central government in India.

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What were the viewpoints presented by the Vice President about separation of powers at 83rd All India conference of presiding officers' in Jaipur?

'**We the People**' essentially gives primacy to elected members of Parliament and the State legislatures. **Separation of powers** enshrined in the Constitution gives this primacy.

It implies that the **judiciary and the executive are inferior** as they are appointed and not elected directly by the people.

What are arguments against President viewpoints?

The Constitution **does not define 'people'**. Its concern is about citizens and not any group or a particular institution. They are all people of this land.

To identify representatives in the legislature to be the **sole representatives of the people** is not appropriate. The theory of a **separation of powers** is **basic to any democratic society**, more than the **letter of the Constitution**.

What are some features of democratic setup in the US and Britain?

In the **United States**, the President has the **power to appoint judges**. This should be endorsed by Congress. But the President is directly **elected by the people** and has prerogatives in several issues which do not apply to a **parliamentary democracy**. The Prime Minister does not have the powers of the U.S. President

In the case of the **United Kingdom**, it is run by **time-honoured conventions and laws** passed by the House of Commons. It does not have a written Constitution **which gives judicial review**. But strong conventions are in place in spite of the primacy of Parliament. Even in Parliament, the Speaker becomes a **non-party man**, choosing when to retire from office.

In India too, the **first two Speakers** and later **Neelam Sanjiva Reddy** resigned from the ruling party for **impartial work**. This convention is not followed now.

What are different viewpoints about conventions?

Democracies cannot be run only by the laws passed in **representative Assemblies**. They need **conventions**.

B.R. Ambedkar realised that conventions are suitable for Indian conditions. Unless conventions are solidified into **constituent laws and bound by strong threads**, institutions may even be destroyed. It will endanger the **very purpose of a Constitution** protecting the citizen.

How are the institutions in India being destroyed by centralising tendencies?

Today's onslaught on the judiciary is aimed at a **powerful constitutional authority** which is refusing to deviate from its **constitutional responsibilities**. The **basic structure of the Indian Constitution** is to be protected by SC, in spite of any over-reach by the legislature.

Other institutions like the ECI, independent investigating agencies and the civil service and police have deviated from **constitutional and other legal responsibilities**.

There are examples of confrontation in current times between elected governments in States and the Governors. The Constitution does not intend Governors to be **subordinates to the central government**.

This goes against the very **dignity of the people of a State as inferior to a higher power** outside their State.

The centre is pushing for **greater centralisation** not only within **constitutional institutions** at the Centre. It is also in States which are ruled by parties other than the national ruling party.

17. [Uniform Civil Code: Can the debate be extricated from identity politics and refocused on gender equality?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Uniform Civil Code: Can the debate be extricated from identity politics and refocused on gender equality?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **25th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Constitution—significant provisions and basic structure.

Relevance: About Uniform Civil Code.

News: Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India can be taken into consideration in India only after addressing a slew of concerns.

What is Uniform Civil Code (UCC)?

Read here: [Explained | The Uniform Civil Code](#)

What are the status and judicial views on implementing UCC in India?

Must Read: [The Debate on Uniform Civil Code – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the view of the constituent Assembly on implementing UCC?

Read here: [A detached approach is crucial for a uniform civil code](#)

What are the two key challenges in implementing UCC?

Intricate issue of marriage: According to NFHS-5, 1.3% of Hindus, 1.9% of Muslims, and 1.6% of others still practising polygyny. This is due to divergent social and kinship rules among various regions.

For instance, northwest India forbid marriage (based on sapinda) between anyone related within five generations on the father’s side and three on the mother’s side. On the other hand, the south and northeast India allow uncle-niece and cross-cousin marriages among Hindus and Muslims allow marriage even between parallel cousins. Hence, this is hard to unify under one single code.

Intricate issue of inheritance: Hindus are governed by the 2005 Hindu Succession Amendment Act (HSAA); Muslims by the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937; Christians and Parsis by the Indian Succession Act 1925 (amended by both communities subsequently), and tribal groups are still subject to custom.

At least six major points of divergence in the above-mentioned laws make unification difficult, and possibly untenable. These are,

- a) Hindu inheritance distinguishes between separate property and coparcenary joint family property, giving coparceners rights by birth. No other personal law makes this distinction.
- b) Within Hindu law itself, states diverge. Kerala abolished joint family property altogether in 1976, but other states retained it, and matrilineal Hindus (as in Meghalaya and Kerala) have different inheritance rules from patrilineal Hindus.
- c) The right to will is unrestricted among Hindus, Christians and Parsis, but Muslim law restricts wills to one-third of the property.
- d) The inheritance laws of Hindus, Christians and Parsis are largely gender-equal today. But, under Muslim personal law, based on the Shariat, women’s shares are less than men’s generically.
- e) Land (a key productive resource) is treated differently from other property in some personal laws but not others.
- f) Social justifications on who deserves to inherit differ. Hindus emphasise sapinda (“shared body particles” in Mitakshara and religious efficacy in Dayabhaga); other communities privilege blood or marital ties.

What should be done to implement the UCC?

The government should refocus on gender equality, while also allowing democratic choice. This can be done by

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-Discussions among women's groups in the 1990s highlighted three positions.

1) Encourage each religious community to pursue its own reform for gender equality, **2)** Constitute a package of gender-just laws which would coexist with personal laws, and a person could choose one or the other upon reaching adulthood, and **3)** Constitute a gender-equal civil code applicable to all citizens without option based on the constitutional promise of gender equality.

–**Cover inheritance and marriage issues separately:** On inheritance, a secular law based on constitutional rights will ensure gender equality.

18. [Ponder This On R-Day – How to make governors constructive constitutional functionaries as originally envisaged by the republic](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Ponder This On R-Day – How to make governors constructive constitutional functionaries as originally envisaged by the republic**” published in **The Times of India** on **25th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

Relevance: About Friction between the state government and the governor.

News: Telangana this year will have two separate official R-Day events due to acrimony between the political executive and the governor. Friction between the state government and the governor is also happening in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Chhattisgarh.

The current phase of conflicts between governors and the political executive stems largely from stalling of bills.

What is the constitutional status of the governor?

The debate on primacy: The Constitution replaced the British Raj legislation where the governor functioned as an agent of the colonial power vested with greater authority than the elected council of ministers. However, the Constitution gave primacy to the legislative assembly and the political executive.

Appointment and dismissal: The constitutional bench in 1994 reiterated the primacy of the legislature and narrowed the ground for the dismissal of a government. The grey areas still allow a governor to make controversial calls on the appointment of chief ministers.

Powers with respect to Bills: Article 200 of the Constitution details the options of a governor when a bill is cleared by the assembly. However, it does not unambiguously lay down a deadline.

Read more: [Bad and ugly – A Governor's departure from convention has set off unsavoury events](#)

What should be done to avoid friction between the state government and the governor?

-The Constitution is clear that the legislature has primacy, hence, governors should not use loopholes to stall the functions of the legislature.

-The Centre must put a deadline on how long a governor can stall a bill.

-Make governors accountable to not just the central executive via the President but also the Rajya Sabha and the state government.

Read more: [The Governor is under the Constitution, not above it](#)

19. [Structural strength – The basic structure of the Constitution has authority](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Structural strength – The basic structure of the Constitution has authority**” published in the **Business Standard** on **25th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

Relevance: About basic structure doctrine.

News: The Vice President of India in 83rd All-India Presiding Officer’s conference criticised the doctrine of the basic structure for undermining parliamentary sovereignty.

What are the major highlights of the Vice President’s address?

Read here: [Vice-President says court can’t dilute Parliament’s sovereignty](#)

What is the basic structure doctrine, and how was the doctrine developed?

Read here: [Basic structure Doctrine](#)

What are the concerns associated with the basic structure doctrine?

The apex court in Singapore, which too has a post-British legal system similar to India’s, deliberately did not adopt the basic-structure doctrine. The court also explained the reasons for not adopting the doctrine.

The court argued that the basic-structure doctrine emerged from the justifiable claim that Constitutions drafted by a Constituent Assembly held a different status in their relationship to the legislature from Constitutions drafted by a regular Parliament.

Why basic structure doctrine is not undermining parliamentary sovereignty?

Must read: [Bound supremacy – Parliamentary sovereignty isn’t undone by the basic structure doctrine](#)

Over the years, the basic structure of the Constitution had served as the “North Star” for legal interpreters of that document. Further, the basic-structure doctrine keeps the Indian state tethered constitutionally to the norms, ideas, and values of 1950.

20. [The blurred lines between gaming and gambling](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The blurred lines between gaming and gambling**” published in **The Hindu** on **27th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: concerns associated with the online gaming industry

News: Some online gaming such as rummy and poker involves financial risks. Despite this, they are not considered as gambling.

What are the issues with games like poker and rummy?

Poker and rummy are some of the online games which **involve financial risks**, i.e., users either can win or lose money in it. These games are called online **gambling apps in parts of the world**. However, **in India**, these games are known as **Real Money Gaming or RMG**.

The reasons are that these gaming platforms say that rummy and poker are ‘**games of skill**’ and therefore don’t fall into the category of betting and gambling.

The **Constitution gives States the power to regulate betting and gambling**. Since these games are considered as RMG, it becomes difficult for the state to regulate it.

Further, even **courts have held that** playing games such as poker and rummy requires and rewards application of mind and doesn’t constitute gambling.

What efforts have been taken by the government to regulate such online games?

Tamil Nadu has attempted to define and restrict these platforms by enacting a law to restrict online gaming. However, the effort at prohibition was struck down by the Madras High Court.

Last year, the **Union Home Department** held a consultation with the stakeholders of online game industry but the submissions were not made public.

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Further, the **Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology** has said that any game that allows or permits gambling is dangerous.

However, the **draft that regulates online gaming** only contains safeguards for such platforms instead of regulating it.

What can be the way ahead?

In order to come up with proper regulatory measures for online gaming, it's **necessary to provide** what constitutes the real money gaming industry and what not. Then only, it would become easier to regulate gambling apps.

21. A chink in the Indo-Pak ice

Source: This post is created based on the article **“A chink in the Indo-Pak ice”**, published in **Business Standard** on **27th January 2023**.

Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 2 – International relations – India and its neighborhood

News: Lately, India- Pakistan relations have taken a positive turn after years of stagnancy.

What are the developments?

1. Pakistan Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, in a recent speech accepted that Pakistan has learned lessons after being defeated in three wars and indicated his desire for peace with India.
2. Shortly, after that India invited Pakistan's Foreign Minister to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization foreign ministers' meeting that India would be hosting in Goa.

Why is there a positive turn in attitude of Pakistani leadership?

- Success of talks between two armies that led to agreement to honor the terms of a 2003 ceasefire agreement in February 2021. The agreement has more or less been held.
- State of Pakistan's economy is critical. It is facing foreign exchange crisis.

What are the challenges that still remains?

- **First**, every time after giving a speech favourable towards India, Pakistani leaders go back to their old tracks. This time as well, Pak PM backtracked and later said talks could take place only when India reversed its decision to end special status on Kashmir. There is very feeble possibility of restoration of article 370.
- **Second**, In the past as well, efforts of talks have been made by India. In 2001, PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee and military dictator Pervez Musharraf over Kashmir met in Agra. In 2015, PM Modi made a surprise visit to Pakistan to greet Nawaz Sharif on his birthday. However, after both the instances, frequency of cross-border terrorism increased.
- **Third**, Pakistani govt. or its military have not yet responded to the invitation.

22. India's groundwater governance is in better shape

Source: The post is based on the article **“India's groundwater governance is in better shape”** published in **The Hindu** on **28th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Economic geography. GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance: Regulation and management of groundwater resources.

News: The article explains the facts and statistics about groundwater in India.

What are some facts and statistics about groundwater resources in India?

India has nearly **18% of the world's population**. It occupies about **2.4% of the total geographical area and consumes 4% of the total water resources**.

A **World Bank report** says that India is the largest groundwater user. A rapidly growing economy and population are straining the country's groundwater resources.

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India has **distinct and varying hydro-geological settings**. Groundwater is the **backbone of India's agriculture and drinking water security**. It meets nearly **80% of the country's drinking water and two-thirds of its irrigation needs**. Groundwater is pivotal to India's water security.

What are the steps taken by the government for protecting groundwater resources?

Jal Shakti Ministry was created by merging the erstwhile Ministries of Water Resources with Drinking Water and Sanitation. This was to give impetus to the **management of water resources** with special focus on **demand and supply management**.

The **Jal Shakti Abhiyan** was launched for **community participation** in the management of water resources through **asset creation, rainwater harvesting and extensive awareness campaigns**.

Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY): It looks to inculcate **behavioural change through incentivisation**. The goal is **"participatory groundwater management"**.

National Project on Aquifer Management (NAQUIM): It envisages the **mapping of subsurface aquifers** to help gather authentic data and enable informed decision-making. Around 24 lakh square kms of the country has been mapped. **Region-wise aquifer management plans** are being prepared and shared with States.

Monitoring stations: There are around 65,025 monitoring stations in India. The numbers are set to go beyond 84,000. The focus will be on identified **high groundwater extracting industrial and urban clusters and groundwater stressed regions**.

Samples from fixed locations are obtained to check for the **presence of heavy and trace metals**. **Dynamic groundwater assessments** will be done annually now and a **groundwater estimation committee** formed to revise the assessment methodology.

A software, **'India-Groundwater Resource Estimation System (IN-GRES)'**, has also been developed.

What are the impacts of steps taken by the government for protecting groundwater resources?

The **groundwater resource assessment report 2022** shows a brighter future for groundwater situations in the country as the initiatives taken by various governments have begun yielding results.

According to the latest assessment, there has been a 3% reduction in the number of **'overexploited' groundwater units** and a 4% increase in the number of **'safe' category units** as compared to 2017.

There was an **improvement in groundwater conditions** in 909 units. The assessment also showed a reduction in annual extraction. **Overall extraction** saw a declining trend of about 3.25% since 2017.

Around 9.37 BCM of additional groundwater potential was created through **artificial water conservation structures**.

The government's interventions for creating a positive impact on the overall groundwater scenario in India reflect the **spirit of cooperative federalism**.

What is the way forward to ensure sustainable management of groundwater resources?

India will need **adequate groundwater resources** to manage anthropogenic pressures.

It is important to **ensure source sustainability** to provide safe drinking water to all rural households by 2024, under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Communities will have to **manage their groundwater resources in a better way** with the help of various government agencies and non-governmental organisations.

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In the context of **climate change**, more efforts must be made to find solutions that are essential for **sustainable development**.

Steps must be taken to make India a **water surplus nation**, thus fulfilling the objective of a key United Nations **Sustainable Development Goal, of water for all**.

23. [Why we need to focus on mental health](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why we need to focus on mental health**” published in **The Indian Express** on **28th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: Issues related to mental health

News: The article explains the prevalence of mental health and its impacts.

What are some facts and statistics related to mental health?

Suicide rates in India are **amongst the highest** when compared to other countries at the same socio-economic level. According to **WHO**, India’s suicide rate in 2019 was at 12.9 per 1,00,000 population.

Suicide has become the **leading cause of death** among those aged 15–29 in India.

Across the world, the prevalence of some mental health disorders is consistently **higher among women** as compared to men.

The pandemic has further exacerbated the problem. According to a **study published in Lancet**, it might have increased the prevalence of depression by 28% and anxiety by 26% globally between 2020 and 2021. The large increases have been noted among younger age groups.

How social media is exacerbating stress and mental ill health for young people?

Social media detracts from **face-to-face relationships**, which are healthier.

It reduces **investment in meaningful activities**. It **erodes self-esteem** through unfavourable social comparison.

What are the impacts of poor mental health?

It is a **leading cause of disability** globally. It is closely linked to poverty in a **vicious cycle of disadvantage**. People living in poverty are at greater risk of experiencing mental health conditions.

On the other hand, people experiencing severe mental health conditions are more likely to fall into poverty through **loss of employment and increased health expenditure**.

Stigma and discrimination often further undermine their **social support structures**. This reinforces the vicious cycle of poverty and mental ill-health.

What are issues related to the treatment of mental health?

Currently, only 20-30% of people with mental illnesses receive **adequate treatment**. One major reason for such a **wide treatment gap** is the problem of **inadequate resources**.

Less than 2% of the government health budget is devoted to mental health issues.

There is a severe **shortage of mental health professionals**. According to one estimate, the number of psychiatrists in the country is less than those in New York City.

What is the way forward to overcome the challenges related to mental health?

We need a “**whole-of-society**” **approach** for the mental health of our people. This should be based on the following four pillars-

Remove deep stigma around mental health issues: It prevents patients from seeking timely treatment and makes them feel shameful, isolated and weak.

Make mental health an integral part of the public health programme: This will reduce stress, promote a healthy lifestyle, screen and identify high-risk groups and strengthen mental health interventions like counselling services.

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Special emphasis will need to be given to schools. In addition, we should pay special attention to groups that are **highly vulnerable to mental health issues** such as victims of domestic or sexual violence, unemployed youth.

Create a strong infrastructure for mental health care and treatment: Substantial investments will be needed to address the gaps in the mental health infrastructure and human resources.

Mental health services should be made affordable: All government health assurance schemes, including Ayushman Bharat, should cover the widest possible range of mental health conditions. Similarly, the **list of essential medicines** includes only a limited number of WHO-prescribed mental health medications.

A **comprehensive review of these policies** will be needed to ensure that financial and other barriers do not prevent people from using services or push them into poverty.

General Studies Paper – 3

General Studies - 3

1. [The gas paradox: Govt encouraging huge investment to push demand but imposing policies that deter domestic exploration and production](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**The gas paradox: Govt encouraging huge investment to push demand but imposing policies that deter domestic exploration and production**” published in **Business Standard** on **23rd January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economic Development

Relevance: import dependency of India on oil and gas

News: The article discusses the policies adopted by the government which makes India import dependent on natural gas.

What is the current situation of India in natural gas?

The government encouraged investments of over Rs 2 trillion in natural gas infrastructure and offered subsidies under the PM Ujwala Yojana (**PMUY**) to expand access to cleaner burning fuels, CNG and LPG.

However, the government has also come up with policies that have held back the development of domestic oil and gas resulting in lower domestic production.

This makes India rely on gas imports with volatile global fuel rates.

The growth rate of domestic natural gas is too weak to match the rising demand in India.

Moreover, the government has come up with **new guidelines** which has affected the oil and gas companies.

What are the new guidelines for natural gas given by India?

The new guidelines **have capped the trading margins on resale of gas** and **provided complex conditions** on prioritising sales to households and transport sectors in the case of similar bids at e-auctions.

It also requires a **huge amount of paperwork** that gas producers must produce before officials. This policy change was announced without any warnings.

This has made Reliance Industries and BP to postpone an auction in which it decided to sell 6 million cubic metres (mcm) a day of gas to Indian consumers at half the rates of international liquefied natural gas (LNG).

What has been the trend in consumption and import of natural gas?

Overall **consumption of natural gas rose 22 percent** between 2015-16 but the growth rate of **LNG imports surged 58 percent** a day during this period.

This led to **imports growing at 53 per cent in 2019-20 from 41 percent in 2015-16** because domestic production failed to catch up with demand.

The dependency on overseas suppliers for **cooking gas rose to 62 per cent from 47 per cent in 2017-18**, after which the government decided to offer subsidised connections under PMUY.

This import dependency will also **affect India to reach the target of 15 percent natural gas in the energy mix by 2030** which currently stands at 6 per cent.

Moreover, natural gas demand from the city gas distribution sector for domestic cooking fuel and transport is expected to grow 15-17 per cent over fiscal 2022-2027.

Therefore, this rapid growth in city gas use will make India more dependent on foreign fuel due to limited domestic production.

Moreover, there were also changes made by the current government in capping the price of gas but none was successful.

What changes were made by the government?

In 2014, the **Rangarajan Committee’s gas pricing formula** was diluted by removing LNG prices as a benchmark to calculate domestic gas rates.

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It then capped the price of gas produced from unconventional areas, including deep waters. However, when these measures did not work, it constituted a committee last year led by former Planning Commission member **Kirit Parikh**.

It recommended a price cap on domestic supplies that is around 20 per cent lower than current levels which will come effect from April this year.

What is the way forward for India?

Policies such as interfering with fuel prices, arbitrarily capping margins of traders, constantly disturbing with gas pricing formulae, and pursuing pointless arbitrations have discouraged **foreign explorers from coming to India**.

Therefore, India **needs to adopt such policies which build a trust of foreign companies in India** and make India more dependent on domestic production.

2. [State actors and information warfare – We should recognise that many can play the game of manipulation targeting the Indian information space](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**State actors and information warfare – We should recognise that many can play the game of manipulation targeting the Indian information space**” published in **Business Standard** on **23rd January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Technology

Relevance: misuse of the internet technology

News: Countries these days use the internet as a tool to spread campaigns and influence the people but such campaigns if not used properly can have harmful effects.

What are the harmful effects of internet campaigns?

Internet-based campaigns are built much like crowds in many political rallies. Such campaigns are operated by political parties, private persons, and governments.

Internet-based **information manipulation is not illegal but it has the ability to distort the beliefs of many people**.

For example, people believe so much in the misinformation spread through **trusted sources like WhatsApp** that even the wrong information seems to be true.

Such campaigns **were also used by Russia** in 2016 to influence the US election and UK on Brexit.

Russian have also simultaneously run pro-vaccine and anti-vaccine campaigns, aiming to get victims misinformation and to hate one another. Thus, bringing conflict within the target society. These campaigns are of two kinds – **a)** specific policy objectives, such as Brexit or a Trump victory, broadly aimed at disrupting the essence of liberal democracies, **b)** bringing chaos and confusion.

Further, thousands of people are using the internet to defame their enemies and to influence government officials about their enemies.

Therefore, many threats can come up with internet-based campaigns and it may also affect a **nation's security**.

What can be the threats for India?

Currently, these campaigns in India are run by local businessmen and local political parties. However, there are also chances that foreign states may run such campaigns.

This would influence Indian masses and have negative outcomes, ultimately weakening India.

Also, India is one of the countries in the Global South that has been the target of Russian influence campaigns on the subject of the invasion of Ukraine.

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What are the measures required by India to prevent such campaigns?

First, India needs to **recognise the problem** of influence campaigns which are aimed at reshaping the behaviour of its state and political system.

Second, it requires **bringing together** knowledge of technology policy, foreign policy, media, and the political system to tackle those campaigns.

Third, it needs to **spread awareness** against the misinformation shared by social media like WhatsApp or Twitter.

3. [Oxfam inequality report: Taxing the 'obscenely' wealthy may not be the right solution](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Oxfam inequality report: Taxing the ‘obscenely’ wealthy may not be the right solution”** published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance– Inequality and taxation structure of India

News– The article explains the Oxfam “Survival of Richest report” and analyses its claims regarding the tax structure in India.

What are some main points contained in the Oxfam Survival of Richest report?

According to the report, there are now **166 billionaires in India**. It is up from 106 in 2020. Wealth is concentrated among the top deciles. **Top 30% accounts for 90%** of the wealth.

Globally, 1% are estimated to have captured almost two-thirds of new wealth.

It argues for a **wealth tax** and **higher taxes on corporates**.

It also argues that **indirect taxes are regressive**. The paper says that the bottom 50% pays six times more indirect tax as a percentage of income as compared to the top 10%.

What are the issues regarding the claims put by the report?

The corporate tax cuts brought the **statutory tax rate** down from 30% to 25.17%.

The **cost of revenue foregone** due to this is estimated at Rs 1.03 lakh crore. However, it is not the equivalent of revenue that would have been realised had there been **no incentive**. The same revenue would not have been realised in its absence.

Further, the comparison of **corporate tax collections** is unfair as the simplified regime for corporate taxes was introduced after 2019.

The current income tax system exempts incomes up to Rs 5 lakh from tax. The **GST rate structure** places a higher burden on luxuries.

The upward trend in the GST collections post 2021, accompanied by higher retail sales of luxury goods, indicates that the tax may be **progressive**. It is despite the **K-shaped recovery**.

An indirect tax can be **more efficient** in a tax system where compliance in direct taxes is not **broad-based**. Therefore, the report underplays the importance of indirect taxes.

Even on direct taxes, India has implemented the **surcharge** on top incomes taking the marginal tax rate to 42.74%.

It is also important to inquire into the computations. It is estimated that the total wealth held by India's richest is Rs **54.12 lakh crore**.

But, there is no clarity regarding the amount of the assets counted as a part of **private wealth or held in the form of trusts or companies**.

Merely adding this to wealth does not make it taxable. The legal title may prohibit the authorities from levying such a tax.

A **siload approach to tax policy, with interlinkages** between different taxes is not meaningful. In the past, India has used a wealth tax. But the collections were low. It was costly to implement it.

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Everything is not fixed by taxes. The role of other **macroeconomic policies**, like **low interest rates and regulatory interventions**, should not be ignored.

4. [It's time for India's universities to join the world](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“It's time for India's universities to join the world”** published in **The Hindu** on **23rd January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Issues relating to development and management of education

Relevance– Higher education

News– The article explains the specifications of the higher education sector in India. It also suggests some solution to establish India as a major player of the world's academic community.

What are the specifications of the higher education sector in India?

Emerging leader– Indians are well-known globally as top scientists and academics, university leaders, and key leaders in high tech. But little is known about the **academic environment** from which they have emerged.

India's academic system is now the world's second largest. The country is actively pursuing reform and improvement.

India is in a particularly **advantageous position**. The world sees India as an increasingly **important economy and geopolitical player**.

India also **plays an important role** in higher education. It is mainly an **exporter of students and talent** in many scientific fields, especially in information technology.

There is a **growing interest abroad** in linking with Indian universities and research institutes due to **disengagement from China** by some Western countries.

Complexity of system– India has one of the world's **most complex and little understood** academic environments. Its higher education sector is **fragmented, inflexible with tight subject boundaries**.

Private sector colleges and universities will continue to fuel growth. **High-quality government institutions** such as the IITs and AIIMS are also expanding and improving.

India has set up the **National Institutional Ranking Framework**. It has helped to **fuel competition** among institutions.

India's **global ranking in scientific publications** improved from the seventh position in 2010 to the third in 2020. India ranks third in terms of the number of PhDs awarded in science and engineering.

India's **Global Innovation Index** ranking has also improved significantly, from 81 in 2014 to 40 in 2022, although it lags significantly behind the U.S. and China.

Indian universities have not scored well in the global rankings. The highest-scoring Indian institution in the 2023 **Times Higher Education ranking** is the Indian Institute of Science, in the 251-300 range.

The **best-known institutions globally** are the IITs. These do not rank well because they are **small, specialised schools and not comprehensive universities**. But, their quality is much better than their ranking scores.

Distinctiveness– There has been emergence of about a dozen **top-quality non-profit private universities**, mostly funded by philanthropically minded Indians. This **elite sector** is expanding and is focused on building an **international 'brand'** for Indian higher education.

India uses English as the main language of science and higher education, which makes it much easier to interact with the rest of the world.

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India has more than **100 research laboratories in diverse areas sponsored by the CSIR** and other Central government agencies. Some are outstanding in terms of their research contributions and their relationships with India's economy.

What is the way forward to establish India as a major player of the world's academic community?

India's universities and its scientific prowess are an important part of a **soft power strategy**. The **internationalisation initiatives** outlined in the NEP is an important start. India's **G20 leadership** is also an excellent opportunity to exercise leadership.

India should convene a **conference of leaders of universities in the G20 countries** with the aim of acquainting them with India's academic opportunities.

It is required to create a **prestigious scholarship programme** that would provide top Indian students and faculty time in leading universities abroad and funding to bring top academics from abroad to India. China's version of this is the China Scholarship Council.

Indian universities, researchers, and academics also need to involve themselves in the **global scientific community** through participation in joint projects, international meetings.

This will need **careful planning, sustained resources, support from the Central and State governments and an expanded international consciousness** in the Indian academic community.

5. [A step too far – 'Fake news' rules will damage press freedom](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

"Draft amendments to IT rules: A looming censor" published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd January 2023**.

"A step too far – 'Fake news' rules will damage press freedom" published in the **Business Standard** on **23rd January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

Relevance: About the process of curbing free speech.

News: The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) recently announced the draft amendments to Information Technology rules.

About the draft IT rules

Read here: [The amendments to the IT Rules, 2021](#)

What are the impacts of the draft IT rules?

Read more: [New IT rules likely to impact ease of business in India, says report](#)

How the draft rules will impact free speech?

-If passed, the rules will allow the government to order digital intermediaries to take down posts it deems fake, without any forum for appeal or redressal. The proposed rules in effect grant the government blanket powers of censorship.

-The rules allow Press Information Bureau (PIB) to remove the posts from online platforms. The PIB is a government agency, and it is not the government's role to play editor.

-Supreme Court's verdict in Shreya Singhal v Union of India (2015) said that take-down orders can only be issued on the grounds laid out in Article 19(2) of the Constitution. . The proposed amendments to IT rules threaten to bring back that draconian spirit into digital governance.

-The PIB's record in "flagging" misinformation has been far from perfect. When the government is merely flagging and labelling content, such a mistake is reversible. If it issues takedown orders under a legal architecture that provides no room for appeal and become constitutionally untenable.

Overall, the determination of fake news cannot be placed in the sole hands of the government.

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What should be done to curb free speech?

All over the world, the task of curbing free speech is best performed by a free and inquiring press. India should follow a similar approach.

India as a democracy is built on the notion that voters have the ability to make judgements about how effectively the government is performing. People can reduce free speech if they are provided with access to free and fair information.

6. [Finetuning the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Finetuning the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code**” published in **The Indian Express** on **24th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economic Development

Relevance: proposals to make changes in IBC, 2016

News: The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016 was brought with the aim to bring structural change in the resolution architecture in the country. However, it has not lived up to the expectations.

What are the problems with IBC, 2016?

According to a recent data, the total **realisable value of the cases** resolved till September 2022 **was only 30.8 per cent of** the admitted claims. The data also shows that **64 per cent of the ongoing cases** have crossed 270 days.

As per reports, the **average time taken for cases to be resolved has risen** and more time being spent on associated litigation.

In order to address these issues, the government has come up with proposals to bring changes in the IBC, 2016.

What are the different proposals for changes in IBC, 2016 made by the government?

The proposal – **a)** aims to **reduce the time for admitting cases** and streamline the process by a greater reliance on data from Information Utilities, **b)** it seeks to **remove ambiguity and bring predictability** in the process, **c)** aims at **extending the pre-packaged insolvency resolution process** that was introduced for MSMEs to other firms, **d)** seeks to address some of the issues that have arisen in the **resolution of real estate firms**, **e)** seeks to **change the manner in which proceeds will be distributed**, i.e.; creditors will receive proceeds up to the liquidation value as prescribed under section 53 of the Code.

And any surplus over such liquidation value will be distributed between all creditors in the ratio of their unsatisfied claims.

These proposals aim at bringing changes in the IBC, 2016. However, any such change should be with the objective of improving its functioning and outcomes.

7. [Needed, a new approach to data protection for minors](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Needed, a new approach to data protection for minors**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT. GS2- Vulnerable sections of population

Relevance– Children in the emerging digital ecosystem

News– The article explains the child centric issues with the **draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022**.

The Bill currently provides for mandatory parental consent for all data processing activities by children, aged under 18 years.

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What are issues with the draft Bill?

The Bill relies on **parents to grant consent** on behalf of the child in all cases. It does not **incentivise** online platforms to proactively build **safer and better services** for minors.

India has **low digital literacy**. Parents in fact often rely on their children to use the Internet. This is an ineffective approach to keep children safe online.

It does not take into account the **“best interests of the child”**. It is a standard that originated in the **Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989**, to which India is a signatory.

India has upheld this standard in laws such as the **Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, and the POCSO Act, 2012**. However, it has not been applied to the issue of data protection.

The Bill does not factor in how teenagers use various Internet platforms for **self-expression and personal development**. They use it for activities ranging from taking music lessons to preparing for examinations to forming communities with people of similar worldviews.

The Bill does allow the government to **provide exemptions** in the future from **strict parental consent requirements, profiling, tracking prohibitions**. This aspect does not acknowledge the **blurring lines** between what a platform can be used for.

For example, Instagram is called a **social media platform**. But is regularly used as an **educational and professional development tool** by millions of artists around the world.

Another issue is that each platform will have to obtain **‘verifiable parental consent’** in the case of minors. This provision can change the nature of the Internet.

It is not possible to tell if the user is a minor without confirming their age. So, the platforms will have to **verify the age** of every user.

All platforms will now have to **manage significantly more personal data** than before. Citizens will be at greater risk of harms such as **data breaches, identity thefts**.

What is the way forward to resolve the concerns related to children in the Bill?

First, we should move from a **blanket ban on tracking, monitoring** and adopt a **risk-based approach to platform obligations**. Platforms should be mandated to undertake a **risk assessment for minors**.

They should not only perform **age-verification-related corresponding obligations** but also design services with default settings and features that protect children from harm. This approach will bring in an **element of co-regulation**, by creating incentives for platforms to design better products for children.

There is a need to relax the age of **mandatory parental consent** for all services to 13 years. This is in line with many other jurisdictions around the world. It will minimize **data collection**. This relaxation in age of consent in tandem with the **risk mitigation approach**.

The government should also conduct **large-scale surveys** of both children and parents to find out more about their online habits, digital literacy, preferences and attitudes.

There is a need to design a policy in India that **balances the safety and the agency of children online**. The onus of keeping our young safe should not be put only on parents. It should be made a **society-wide obligation**.

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8. Building resilience for the long game

Source– The post is based on the article “**Building resilience for the long game**” published in the **Business Standard** on **25th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance– Issues related to fiscal policy

News-The article explains the economic scenario around the world and for India. It also provides some suggestions for the upcoming budget.

What is the expected economic scenario for FY2024 around the world and for India?

2023 is likely to be a year of **global economic slowdown**. The impact of **synchronised and aggressive monetary policy tightening** cycles will be felt.

Mild recession in both the US and Europe is expected.

This will affect India’s growth via **weak exports and delayed private investment**.

India’s **real GDP growth** can be below the estimated level.

Nominal GDP growth is likely to be slow due to moderation in commodity price. **Tax buoyancy** is highly sensitive to nominal GPP. It means that a **moderation in tax buoyancy** is expected in FY24.

What should be the focus of the coming budget?

The budget should focus on **fiscal consolidation**. The central government’s fiscal deficit of around 6.5 per cent of GDP.

Public infrastructure spending should be increased, but without **compromising on consolidation**.

It should be done by using money created by the reduction in **food and fertiliser subsidy bills**, and other **revenue-raising mechanisms** such as **asset monetisation**.

There is a need to **rationalise personal income taxes** so that more individuals opt for the new regime of lower taxes and fewer exemptions.

But a broader reduction in the **effective tax rate** will add to the government’s fiscal burden, without **boosting consumption**. A **more targeted support** for lower income households, may be more worthwhile.

From a **medium-term perspective**, it should aim for creating more jobs by **boosting the manufacturing sector**. There is a need to steer away from **protectionist measures** such as Custom duty hikes.

More focus on **skill development** to empower the youth, **increased agriculture investments** to boost farm productivity, and using **digital infrastructure** to find and connect new markets.

In the long term, there will be **high energy demand**. So, it is essential that this increased energy comes with **minimum environmental impact**.

India needs to be **green first, rather than transition to green later**. This requires **investments in renewables, green technology and large-scale afforestation**.

Agriculture and food security depend on access to a consistent supply of fresh water. Investments are required to **ensure water availability** across the country.

There is a need to create stronger **counter-cyclical fiscal buffers**. Setting aside a small percentage of revenues every year, will enable us to smooth out the **fiscal deficit** over the years.

9. [What ails the Ken-Betwa River link project?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “[What ails the Ken-Betwa River link project?](#)” published in **The Hindu** on **25th January 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Environment**

Relevance: **concerns associated with the Ken-Betwa Link Project.**

News: The Steering Committee of the Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP) held its third meeting recently. KBLP is an important project but it also has challenges associated with it.

What is the Ken-Betwa Link Project?

Read Here: [What is the “Ken-Betwa Link Project”?](#)

What are the concerns with the KBLP project?

The government’s plan is based on a ‘**surplus and deficit**’ model for the project and as per experts, this model **has little scientific basis**. They are also concerned that the project will **endanger the water security of Panna**.

Sections 29 and 35(6) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 restrict human activities within ‘sanctuaries’ and ‘national parks’ without prior approval and the project aims at going against the provisions.

Further, diversion or stopping or enhancement of the flow of water into or outside wildlife sanctuaries/parks is prohibited unless it is deemed to be necessary.

The Central Empowered Committee (**CEC**) of the Supreme Court has also found that such diversion is not necessary to improve and better manage wildlife in the park.

Moreover, **downstream of the national park** lies the Ken Gharial Sanctuary which was created to protect the critically endangered Gangetic gharial. Therefore, the proposed dam may also have an **impact on the flow of water of the sanctuary**.

Further, the **project is still to receive** full forest clearance, environment approval from the National Green Tribunal. Still, it got Cabinet approval and was announced for implementation in the 2022-23 Union budget.

What are the legal problems with the project?

As per **CEC**, approval given by the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) to the KBLP has not been proved to be necessary for the improvement and better management of the wildlife.

Further, as per the experts, an independent hydrological study of river Ken is necessary and no developmental project should destroy the ecology of the fragile ecosystems and an important tiger habitat in the country.

How will the Panna tiger reserve be affected by the KBLP?

Panna tiger reserve lost all of its tigers by 2009 and it took lots of efforts and almost a decade to reintroduce them back. Panna has **deep gorges** which will be drowned if a new dam is built.

Further, the government has sought to develop a larger **Panna Tiger Landscape** to provide an alternative option. But this may not be the solution as landscape should be created in any case.

Moreover, such landscape-level action is also required around most wildlife areas in light of a new global target to protect 30% of global terrestrial and marine areas by 2030, finalized at the COP15 of the United Nations Biodiversity Conference 2022.

What can be the way ahead?

As per experts, it will be more economical and faster if the **governments restored Bundelkhand’s lakes and ponds** rather than building dam. The region already receives adequate annual rainfall.

Hence, KBLP has both technical and legal issues and it can also intensify water conflicts between Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

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[10. Joshimath On Sea? – Mega projects for Andaman and Nicobar need to be ultra-sensitive about ecology and tribes](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Joshimath On Sea? – Mega projects for Andaman and Nicobar need to be ultra-sensitive about ecology and tribes**” published in **The Times of India** on **25th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Relevance: About Great Nicobar Project.

News: Nearly 100 former civil servants represented themselves to the President against the development plans on Great Nicobar Island.

About the Great Nicobar Project

Read here: [Nicobar project gets assent for diversion of 130 sq km of forest](#)

What are the strategic and ecological significances of the Great Nicobar project?

Read more: [Strategic and ecological significance of the Great Nicobar project](#)

What are the concerns associated with the Great Nicobar project?

The project is likely catastrophic for the island’s sensitive ecology and indigenous hunter-gatherer tribes like the Shompen who are already listed as a ‘particularly vulnerable tribal group’. The region has some of India’s largest mangroves and that over half the species of butterflies, 40% of birds and 60% of mammals are endemic to the region. All of this unique biodiversity could be lost forever.

What should be done?

Disregarding the ecological sensitivity of the region could see the making of another Joshimath-like catastrophe on a grander scale. Compensatory afforestation in Haryana or MP will not prevent such a catastrophe. Therefore, any future plans to develop the Andaman and Nicobar Islands need to seriously factor in the environmental impact on the region.

[11. Japan to flush Fukushima wastewater](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “Japan to flush Fukushima wastewater”, published in **The Hindu** on **27th January 2023**.

Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 3 – Environmental Pollution

News: Japan is expected to start flushing 1.25 million tonnes of wastewater from the embattled Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean this year.

The 2011 earthquake of 9 magnitude, damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. radioactive materials leaked from the plant and made its surrounding land uninhabitable.

The water that Japan wants to flush was used to cool the reactors and contains radioactive isotopes.

What are the justifications by the government?

Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), which operates the Fukushima facility, has said that it has treated the water to remove most radioactive isotopes. The water is expected to be far above safety standards.

Nuclear plants around the world regularly release water containing trace amounts of radionuclides into large water bodies.

There is no known threshold below which radiation can be considered safe.

What are the concerns?

Isotopes of ruthenium and plutonium could not be removed entirely by the TEPCO’s treatment procedure. These isotopes could stay in the ocean and marine creatures for a longer period of time.

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Experts expect the affected water to poison the fish.

Any discharge of radioactive materials will increase the risk of cancer and other known health impacts to those who are exposed,

What are the other options for Japan?

Japanese government can't store the water for longer, because tritium's half-life is 12-13 years. The affect of other radioactive materials will also reduce within this period.

Fukushima facility has been declared uninhabitable, so permanent tanks to hold the water can be built here, each with a capacity of 1,000 metre cube.

12. Fighting The Big G – on big tech's anti-competitive practices

Source– The post is based on the article “**Fighting The Big G**” published in **The Times of India** on **27th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT

Relevance– Regulation of digital ecosystem

News– The article explains the issue of dominant position and anti-competitive practices of big digital players in the digital space. It also explains the change in business model by Google in India due to SC decision on Competition Commission of India's rulings.

How is Google changing its business model in India?

The change was triggered by the Supreme Court asking Google to comply with the **Competition Commission of India's rulings**.

In the new model, instead of creating a bouquet of apps, smartphone makers can **license individual apps** from Google. Also, its search engine will not necessarily be the **default setting**.

How the Google business model is facing regulatory crackdown across the world?

South Korea's parliament in 2021 passed a bill imposing curbs on the **proprietary billing system of Google and Apple**.

The EU in May will enforce a new law called the **Digital Markets Act**. It will prevent “**gatekeepers**” from engaging in **anti-competitive behaviour**. It will no longer be business as usual for the **Android OS ecosystem**.

Why substantial change in business approach of big digital companies is unlikely to happen in near future?

The **walled garden approach** that ensured Android's dominance is based on a **complex model of cross-subsidies**.

Google's huge user base comes from offering **free services** such as a search engine and email. This user base is then monetised for **advertising revenue**. Even **third party apps** cannot all wish away Google.

Application Programming Interfaces offered by Google allow app developers to utilise a number of its services. It **reduces development costs** for third party app developers. This **web of cross-subsidies** cannot be disentangled overnight.

What is the right way to establish fair competition in digital space?

The **regulatory crackdown** on the Android ecosystem is necessary to open the door to more competition. It may not happen overnight but the process is underway.

The **digital world's economies of scope** require a **new set of tools**.

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13. [Invent In India – on defence indigenisation in India](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Invent In India**” published in **The Times of India** on **27th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance– Defence reforms and modernisation

News– The article explains the need for defence indigenisation in India. It also explains the steps needed to be taken for defence indigenisation.

Why is there a need for strong focus upon defence indigenisation in India?

India’s neighbourhood isn’t a **peaceful** one. It has to be militarily strong, and indigenisation is the best way to do that.

India has largely relied on **foreign defence platforms** over the years. About 60% of India’s defence hardware is of **Russian origin**. The **Ukraine war** has thoroughly exposed this Russian arsenal.

GoI’s indigenisation move is a good start. However, the country is still confronted with gaps in **indigenous development capabilities for high-tech platforms**. For example, even the import content for the indigenous Tejas fighter continues to be around 50%.

What is the way forward for defence indigenisation in India?

The focus now ought to be on **increasing the level of indigenisation**. That can happen only through improving the **quality of R&D**.

Civilian and defence R&D can create a **mutually reinforcing technology ecosystem**. Many of the world’s widely used products and services have **military-civilian dual applications**.

The internet, space rockets, GPS and radar are merely the most famous examples.

Drones are the latest example of military research changing civilian life. Defence research has even had an **enormous impact on healthcare**.

There is a need for **fiscal support** for domestic weapons systems.

GoI must help create a **network of big companies** for manufacturing weapons, **technology entrepreneurs** to experiment with new tech and **academia** for talented young researchers.

14. [Regional RBIs: The case for baby RBIs](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The case for baby RBIs**” published in the **Business Standard** on **28th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance: Issues relating to monetary policy

News: The article explains the possibility of regional RBIs for India.

What is the need for regional RBIs in India?

The administration, the legislature, the judiciary, and a host of other institutions have **state-level bodies**. All also perform a **regulatory role**. This can be applied to India’s monetary authority, the RBI.

Despite its **admirable competence and proven track record**, the RBI is perhaps not working as expected. The task before it is **simply too large**. India has become very big on all economic parameters.

RBI doesn’t have the **capacity to supervise an economy** that’s growing so fast and becoming larger by the year.

There exists variation in **regional inflation rates**. The **all-India inflation number** is just too broad to be useful. It misses the considerable **inter-state variation**. It fails to capture things like **urban-rural divergence** within the same state.

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The US has **12 Federal Reserve Banks**, whose 24 branches constitute the Federal Reserve System. Each of these operates within the boundaries of its own designated area.

A key aspect of the US state Feds is to **represent the region in the Federal Reserve System**. For this, they possess a deep understanding of the regional economy.

RBI also has 25 **regional offices**. It is twice more than twice the number of the US Reserve Banks. But these **aren't independent entities**. They are **branches with a vertical hierarchy**.

15. Becoming The Global Factory: How To Nail It This Time

Source: The post is based on an article "**Becoming The Global Factory: How To Nail It This Time**" published in **The Times of India** on **28th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: About the factors leading the improvement in the Indian economy

News: India has seen economic growth in recent years and received \$84 billion in foreign direct investment despite declining global demands, pandemic and war.

This shows that India has huge potential to attract additional FDI in the real sectors.

How is India in a better economic position?

Implemented systematic changes: India is in a better position now because of numerous **systematic changes** made by India in **telecommunications, power, infrastructure and talent**. India also has a **huge educated population** with most of them being youth.

Increasing Per Capita Income: According to a **report by Morgan Stanley**, the number of households earning over \$35,000/year will increase fivefold in the next decade, reaching over 25 million.

This will **increase the GDP** to more than \$7.5 trillion by 2031 and an 11% annual compounding of market capitalisation to \$10 trillion over the next decade.

Increase in manufacturing: India is **transitioning from being a global office to a global factory in the manufacturing sector**. The combination of data and technology will help India in leading the world.

India is **currently the fifth largest economy in the world** and is on track to surpass Japan in the next five years and be on a par with Germany.

Growth of the banking sector: The improvement in the banking network in the country has improved the flow of funds and given a boost to the number of bank accounts. The bank account has increased from 43 per 1,000 people in 1972 to about 1,600 per 1,000 now.

Other Initiatives: Such as **Production-Linked Incentives, the China Plus One strategy and plans like Gati Shakti** have given a boost to the overall economy of the nation and have ensured ease of doing business in India.

Increase in FIIs: India has also been the destination for large Foreign Institutional Investors (**FIIs**) and it is witnessing a rise in sales of homes, automobiles and credit card spending across the country.

However, challenges such as geopolitical disruptions and rising energy and commodity costs exist in India, but these can be mitigated by bringing up policies and eliminating obsolete laws and regulations.

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16. [Question From The Homeless In Hills](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Question From The Homeless In Hills**” published in **The Times of India** on **28th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster Management

Relevance: problems related to land subsidence in Uttarakhand

News: The [land subsidence of Joshimath](#) has been caused due to the failure of the government as well as the judiciary. Moreover, it is not only Joshimath but there are other places also in Uttarakhand where the problem exists.

How has the judiciary failed in preventing natural calamities in Uttarakhand?

There were three such instances where timely action by the judiciary could have prevented the current Joshimath crisis.

Kedarnath flood, 2013: The Supreme Court in suo moto petition ordered that no further clearances should be granted to any hydroelectric power project in Uttarakhand. The court also constituted an expert body to study the impact of hydroelectric power projects on the environmental degradation of Kedarnath.

Justice Radhakrishnan committee found that **under-construction and existing projects had aggravated the 2013 disaster** and it **recommended the cancellation of 23 out of 24** proposed HEPs in Uttarakhand.

However, later another **bench ordered the reconsideration of six of the proposed 24 projects**. These six projects also got clearance from MoEF, ultimately leading to the environmental crisis in Uttarakhand.

Case of widening Chardhaam route, 2018: The PIL petitioners argued that widening the route would lead to the cutting of the mountains and trees. This can cause landslides. SC took cognisance and ordered in 2020 that a narrower Intermediate Width would be implemented.

However, in 2021 a new SC bench ordered the **implementation of the Double Lane project in Uttarakhand**.

Rishi Ganga flood, 2021: After the flood, locals filed a PIL in the Uttarakhand High Court praying for the cancellation of the Rishiganga and Tapovan-Vishnugad HEPs, along with rehabilitation of Raini village. However, **the court rejected the petitions and even fined the petitioners**.

Now, after the Joshimath land subsidence problems caused by the construction of HEP. Hence, the failure of the government and judiciary to address the issue resulted in the Joshimath crisis.

17. [The moral and intellectual crises in economic policies](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The moral and intellectual crises in economic policies**” published in **The Hindu** on **28th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy: growth, development and employment

Relevance: Paradoxes of GDP growth

News: The article explains the **intellectual and moral crisis** affecting the Indian economy.

What is the crisis of employment in India?

Job creation has not kept pace with the **demand for jobs**. Moreover, most jobs don't pay enough and have **no social security**. The **paradigm of economic growth and globalisation** followed by Indian governments is a cause of the problem.

There is less employment because the **organised manufacturing and service sectors** are also employing fewer people per unit of capital in order to improve their **own labour productivity**.

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The Indian economy's problem is the **large size of its informal sector and the small scale of its enterprises**. Employment in the formal sector is also becoming informal with **outsourcing, contract employment, and gig work**.

Young men need jobs too. Increasing numbers of young and underemployed males are leading to more crime and violence, and sexual assaults of women in Indian cities.

Concepts of **"economies of scale" are changing to "economies of scope"**, and enterprise forms from **concentrated to dispersed units**.

How women's participation in the workforce is not conducive to the employment scenario in India?

As per economists, more women in the workforce will lead to faster growth.

This **distorted view of the economy** ignores reality. More Indian women have been working outside their homes to earn money than in any other country perhaps.

They are working in **a)** large numbers on farms, as caregivers and domestic workers, and weavers and producers of handicrafts in small enterprises, **b)** as teachers and as Anganwadi and ASHAs providing essential services to communities. The **essential services** that women provide to society are **not considered productive work** for the economy.

They are being pulled into the **limited jobs provided by the formal economy**. Pushing more women into the formal economy will improve the **"female participation rate"** in the formal economy and may add to GDP too.

However, it will not solve the basic problem related to the lack of **enough good jobs in formal sectors** of India's economy for the young population.

Why is the overemphasis on the growth of GDP not good for society and nature?

The **paradigm of "growth, growth, growth"** treats human society and nature as a means to goals of producing more wealth for investors and more GDP.

According to this **paradigm of growth**, the **human needs for safety, health and sufficient income** of workers only increase the cost of doing business. These are not concerns of the investors. The state must take care of them.

What is the way forward for economic policy?

Growth of GDP is not the purpose of **human civilization**.

India's leaders must find a path to **reach "poorna swaraj"** related to **social, political, and economic freedoms** for all Indians.

Economic growth must create **equal opportunities for all to learn and earn with dignity** and not harm the natural environment that sustains all life.

A **new paradigm of economic science and policy** is required.

General

Studies

Paper – 4

General Studies - 4

1. [In Good Faith: Pranam vs Pramana — why faith and science must co-exist](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**In Good Faith: Pranam vs Pramana — why faith and science must co-exist**” published in **The Indian Express** on **27th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS4- Ethics and human interface

Relevance– Conflict between values of scientific approach and faith

News– The article explains the difference between faith and science. It also explains how scientific understanding is being undermined today. It also suggests the way forward for harmonious coexistence between faith and science.

What is the difference between Pranam and Pramana?

Pranam– It is derived from Sanskrit with “**pra**” meaning “**forward**” while “**ānama**” means “**bending or stretching**”. Together, *pranama* means “bending, bowing in front”.

Pranam is a common Hindu traditional custom of **greeting a person** where one often bows to a superior person. Bowing to an eminent person and God is considered as a **show of faith** in them. It denotes **faith, tradition, and dogma-based decisions**.

Pramana– It is also a Sanskrit word, meaning “**proof**”. It refers to the **concept of objectivity and science**. It is the means that can lead to knowledge.

Three of the pramanas, which are almost universally accepted are **pratyakṣa (eyewitness or personal experience), anumāna (logical inference), śabda (expert opinion)**.

What is the difference between science and faith?

In a science-based society, people have the **freedom to question things, and seek answers**. Then, they **can choose their way forward** based on their own understanding. They are **free to exchange notes and learn** from each other. But this is not the case with faith.

The other important difference pertains to **acceptance of change**. Faith and dogma are **constants** and do not accept questioning.

As new discoveries occur, our understanding is **updated**. It is quite possible for **scientifically appropriate thinking** to change with update.

We can take the example of the health sector. Our **attitudes towards menstruation** is a case in point. Rather than treating it as a **biological phenomenon**, a lot of **semi-religious customs** have been built around it. They adversely affect a girl’s health.

Most parents and teachers are very **uncomfortable discussing human biology** with children. This is also reflected in health issues around childbirth, breastfeeding, and contraception.

The approach to promote traditional medicine reflects this **fault line**. There are conflicts between promoting traditional medicine **just because it is our tradition**, and insisting that it be **subjected to the rigours of modern science**.

How is scientific understanding being undermined?

Today, evidence based thinking is under threat. The **overload of information** and our inability to process them appropriately has resulted in faith being promoted in the presence of abundant information.

Evidence is manufactured to suit one’s point of view. Rejecting scientific institutions and scientists wholly is unfair.

The current Covid-19 pandemic provided a **fertile ground** for promoting faith and questioning science. Today, the teaching of science itself has become a **ritual**. It is more of **rote learning than understanding**.

What is the way forward for society?

Faith will always have a place in any society but should not be at the **cost of science**.

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It is also important for faith-based organisations to understand the **limitations of faith** and not undermine the importance of science in daily life.

There is a need to **learn to coexist** by understanding the need for both for our societal wellbeing. Both need to be promoted but not at the expense of the other.

Teachers or parents should encourage children to **ask questions and not only memorise** theorems and formulae like mantras. Health professionals must also learn to not belittle faith.

Platforms for **constant dialogue and harmonious coexistence** between these two critical pillars of a society are needed in the current times.