



9 PM

Compilation

January 2023

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General

Studies

Paper – 1

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General Studies - 1

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

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

Syllabus: GS 1 – Population and associated issues.

Relevance: About the declining working-age population.

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

About the declining working-age population in major economies

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

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

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

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

About the declining working-age population in China and India

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How nations can overcome the declining working-age population?

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS1- Indian culture

Relevance– Issues related to regulation of film industry

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

What is the restructured form of film bodies in India?

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

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

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

What are the issues with the new arrangement?

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS1- Urbanisation

Relevance– Issues related to land in urban areas

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

Why is illegal encroachment of land prevalent in India?

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

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

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

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

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

What are the challenges related to illegal encroachment of land?

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

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

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

What is the way forward to the problem of encroachment?

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

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

4. [How countries treat their ultra-rich](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**How countries treat their ultra-rich**” published in the **Business Standard** on **9th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Effects of globalization on Indian society.

Relevance: About capitalism and its present impact on globalization.

News: In the recent period, some rich and powerful people have faced trouble in countries such as the US, Russia, China, and Saudi Arabia.

About Freedom in the World index and the reality of ultra rich persons

US: The US has a score of 83 and is classified as “Free” in the index. There rich people in the US can oppose the government without fear of death, jail, exile, expropriation or commercial harm.

Saudi Arabia (score of 7, regarded as “Not Free”): About 500 people were locked up in a Hotel by the “anti-corruption agency”. Many victims were forced to buy their freedom by giving up their wealth.

China (score of 9): Ever since the present Chinese President took charge, he deployed state power against the private sector.

Russia (score of 19): Ever since the Ukraine war, the Russian rouble has lost its hard-currency status. Rich people have been dying under mysterious circumstances, at an average rate of three per month.

Read more: [Digital India is well positioned to make the most of globalization](#)

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How capitalism is slowly damaging the present globalization?

After the Berlin Wall was brought down, the world made inevitable progress towards capitalism and freedom. The world nations are approaching the third globalization in a way it damages the globalization.

Note: *The third globalization is marked by the emergence and eventual dominance, within the most advanced industrial countries, of the information sector.*

Such as, **1)** The State's use their power in ways that are unfavourable to globalisation. For instance, the US government blocking Chinese de facto public sector undertakings like Huawei from operating in its country, **2)** The financial investors in the first world countries demand higher risk compensations when investing in unsafe places, **3)** There is a narrowing of global value chains to emphasise production in safe places, and **4)** Several wealthy families in places like China and Russia are systematically moving assets, businesses, homes, and loved ones into rule-of-law havens like London.

Read more: [WESTERN MNCs HAVE WEAKENED GLOBALIZATION BY TAKING SIDES](#)

Whether the rich are the target of taxation or the engine of growth, their exit is harmful for globalization.

5. [A timely halt – SC must lay down rehabilitation norms for eviction from public spaces](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A timely halt – SC must lay down rehabilitation norms for eviction from public spaces**” published in **The Hindu** on **9th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Relevance: About the land conflicts between the public and the state.

News: Earlier, the Uttarakhand High Court demanded the eviction of around 50,000 people within a week as they are accused of squatting on railway property for decades in Haldwani in Uttarakhand. But recently the Supreme Court has halted the forcible eviction.

What are the directions of the Supreme Court?

The court **a)** Demanded the need for rehabilitation before eviction, **b)** The court orders had allowed proceedings against individual occupants under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971, to be complete before eviction.

About the land conflicts between public and state

People tend to encroach on public land as there is a **shortage of housing** and **inadequate recognition of the right to shelter**. This often leads to attempts to evict the occupants and spawns litigation.

What are the impacts of land conflicts between the public and the state?

-The public claims occupancy rights based on long years of stay at the same location.

-Court judgments stress rehabilitation measures. But mandatory rehabilitation may prove to be an incentive for encroachment. Further, India does not have a good record on the rehabilitation of evicted people from public spaces.

So, the Supreme Court in the Haldwani eviction case should **a)** lay down the law on meaningful rehabilitation, **b)** Prescribe effective prevention of encroachments.

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6. [Asia the saver – The global savings glut may persist as, despite ageing rapidly, Asia can continue to be a net saver](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Asia the saver – The global savings glut may persist as, despite ageing rapidly, Asia can continue to be a net saver**” published in **Business Standard** on 10th January 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Population and Associated Issues

Relevance: impact of demographic changes on Current Account balance

News: The article discusses the impact of aging population and savings on the current account balance of Asian nations.

How an aging population may affect the saving of Asian nations?

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

Further, there is disparity among the A-10 on the current account balance. **For example**, India and Indonesia run deficits, whereas north Asian economies run in surpluses.

However, they have collectively accumulated a surplus of nearly \$5 trillion in the last decade. These surpluses are invested in global assets which have also led a boom in the consumption of the world.

But an **aging population may lead to a drop in the savings** of A-10 because production would fall due to a smaller number of workers and consumption may keep rising due to the increasing lifespan.

The number of consumers per worker is known as the **dependency ratio**. **A higher ratio could turn current account balances from surpluses to deficits.**

How higher dependency ratio affects the current account balances?

First, the aggregate demand that affects current account balances includes **domestic consumption and investment**. Investment (households, corporations and the government) fall as population growth slows and then turns negative.

This in turn leads to lesser requirement of investments in growth of the economy and invest is more driven by global demand-supply balances and rather than local demand. This affects the current account balance.

Second, household savings depend on sufficiency of pensions, especially for the retirees who depend on pensions for their future. If pension mechanisms are not adequate, it leads to a drop in consumption. Therefore, there should be a better saving mechanism in order to have a better current account balance.

How better pension plans can help in the current account surplus?

The **Japanese fund GPIF** has nearly 10 percent of all Japanese wealth, with half of it deployed in foreign financial assets.

The accumulated foreign assets of Japan are so large that the **income from them exceeds 4 percent of gross domestic product**. This helps Japan’s current account to stay in surplus **despite a shrinking workforce**.

However, the pension plans of most of the Asian economy are not good enough to build higher savings which ultimately affects the current account.

Therefore, there is a need for personal savings or government-mandated savings in Asia to grow. This increase in savings with the increase in financial assets will make the A-10 economies as providers of capital to the world.

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7. [The delay in the decennial Census](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The delay in the decennial Census**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Population and associated issues.

Relevance: About the implications of the delaying census.

News: The decennial Census exercise has been postponed till September 2023. Except for the 2021 census, none of the previous exercises has been delayed.

What is the Census?

[Click Here to read](#)

What does the Constitution say about the Census?

[Click here to read](#)

How is the Census conducted?

The decennial census is carried out by lakhs of enumerators empanelled and trained by the government in two phases.

First phase: It is the housing Census, where data on housing conditions, household amenities and assets possessed by households are collected.

Second phase: In this phase, data on population, education, religion, economic activity, Scheduled Castes and Tribes etc are collected.

What are the implications of the delaying census?

Census data is crucial for various administrative functions, welfare schemes, and other surveys. The implications of the delaying census are,

Firstly, outdated Census information (available from the last Census in 2011) often becomes unreliable and affects those who do and do not receive the benefits of welfare schemes. For instance,

As per the National Food Security Act, 2013, 67% of the country’s population (approximately 80 crore in 2011) is entitled to receive subsidised food grains from the government under the targeted public distribution system (PDS). Over the last decade means that if the 67% ratio is applied to 2020’s projected population of 137 crore, PDS coverage should have increased to around 92 crore people.

Secondly, census data are **critical for other sample surveys** conducted in the country as they use the Census data as a ‘frame’ or list from which a representative sample of the population is selected for surveys. For instance, for the latest edition of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) released last year, it was the 2011 data that served as the sampling frame.

Thirdly, census is **crucial to determine the population of migrants and migration patterns**. Despite the large-scale migration during the pandemic, the only data available from the government was from 2011, which could not answer queries on the numbers, causes and patterns of migration.

8. [The beginning of India’s cultural renaissance](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The beginning of India’s cultural renaissance**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Indian culture

Relevance– Government policies and interventions for promoting culture of India

News– The article explains the recently held Kashi Tamil Sangamam and its significance

What is the significance of Kashi and Tamil Nadu for Indian culture?

Kashi is one of the **oldest living cities** of the world. In Tamil Nadu, people speak the **world’s oldest language**. are towering pillars of ancient Indian civilisation.

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Both have rich and old traditions of **arts, music, craftsmanship, philosophy, spirituality**. Tamil saints lived in Kashi and intensified its spiritual aura. There was a tradition of taking holy Ganga jal to the Rameshwaram temple.

What were the main events of Kashi Tamil Sangamam?

People from all walks of life from Tamil Nadu visited Kashi. They experienced the **city's traditions** and its **iconic landmarks** such as the Kashi Vishwanath temple.

The government organised a '**textiles conclave**' during the Sangamam. Several **eminent personalities** of different segments of the textile industry from Tamil Nadu and Kashi shared their experiences and exchanged ideas at a session on **Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**.

The textiles conclave also dwelled on **wooden toys**.

What is the significance of this sangamam?

Sangamam created a unique platform to **rediscover and integrate** our heritage and ancient knowledge with modern thought, philosophy, technology and craftsmanship. This creates a **new body of knowledge and fosters innovations**. It will help our artisans, weavers, entrepreneurs and traders.

For instance, Varanasi is well known for **Banarasi silk saris**. Kancheepuram is famous for its **shimmering silk saris**. Weavers and entrepreneurs from both regions have a lot to gain from interacting with each other.

The textiles sector has great **job-creating potential**. India's textiles market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 12-13% to nearly \$2 trillion by 2047s. Kashi and Tamil Nadu have a key role to play to achieve this vision.

The Sangamam was in step with the entire spectrum of this government's policies. These policies have focused on **welfare of the poorest of the poor, love for Indian culture, and promoting local industries and handicrafts**.

The Sangamam has ignited a **new cultural zeal** in India. It is the beginning of India's **cultural renaissance** that is not limited to the bonding of Tamil Nadu and Kashi. It will extend to all cultures of this great country.

9. [Overtaking China – New population estimates have wider implications](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Overtaking China – New population estimates have wider implications**" published in **Business Standard** on **19th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Population and Associated Issues

Relevance: challenges with increasing population

News: The article discusses the challenges with India due to the increasing population.

What is the news?

According to the **World Population Review**, India's population has become 1.417 billion.

According to **China's National Statistics Bureau**, in 2022 China saw its first decline in population since the famine-hit 1960s. The population count in China is now 1.412 billion.

This means **India is now the world's largest country by population**.

What are the challenges for India due to increasing population?

It is true that a higher population brings more tax to the government leading to increase in spending. However, it also has challenges associated with it.

Some of the challenges with increasing population are – **a)** pressure on man-made infrastructure such as apartments, **b)** pressure on natural resources, **c)** create challenges for sustainability of India's natural habitats; e.g., Joshimath crisis.

Must Read: [China, India population: Implications of slowing dragon, racing elephant](#)

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What can be the way ahead?

There is a need for India to have **quality population**; i.e., it needs to enhance its human resource capability by refocusing its public policy.

This would help India in reaping the benefits out of its demographic dividend and become an upper-income country.

10. [Aging factory – on China’s population decline](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Aging factory**” published in **The Hindu** on **21th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Population and associated issues

Relevance– Issues related to population planning and control

News– The article explains declining population in China and its impact on Chinese economy

What are some facts and statistics about the declining population of China?

China’s population declined by 8,50,000 in 2022. Births in China last year dropped by more than 10% to 9.56 million.

China has been making efforts to boost birth rates that have been declining since the government introduced a **harsh “one-child policy”** in 1980. The belated introduction in 2016 of a “**two-child policy**” was not successful.

How is the declining population impacting the Chinese economy?

China’s economy is already feeling the impact of **demographic change**. The **16-59 working age** population in 2022 was 875 million. It is a decline of around 75 million since 2010.

Wages are rising. **Labour-intensive jobs** are moving out, predominantly to Southeast Asia.

The **above-60 population** has increased. The number of elderly will peak by 2050 at 35% of the population. China’s National Working Commission on Ageing estimates **spending on health care for the elderly** will take up 26% of the GDP by 2050.

China is on track to follow **Japan’s example of a prolonged period of a shrinking workforce with declining growth**. The proportion of child and elderly populations in China as of 2020 was similar to Japan’s in 1990. Moreover, China reached this inflection point faster.

What are lessons for India?

India’s **proportion of child and elderly population** in 2020 was similar to China’s in 1980. It was the time when its **economic boom** started in China.

That was made possible only by taking advantage of **demographic dividend** by investing heavily in health care and education.

11. [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.

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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.

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General Studies Paper –2

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General Studies - 2

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Emerging global order and Implications for India.

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

What are important geopolitical developments taking place across Asia?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the Indian version of multipolarity?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- India and its neighbourhood relationship

Relevance– Bilateral relationship between India and China

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What has not changed in their bilateral relations?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Indian literature

News– The article explains the status of vernacular literature in India. The International Booker Prize was awarded to **Tomb of Sand**. It is an English translation of **Geetanjali Shree Hindi novel Ret Samadhi**.

What is the status of literature in vernacular?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About achieving equity in healthcare.

News: India’s primary level can take care of almost 70-75% of the population’s healthcare needs.

About 20-25% is addressed at the secondary level. Around 5-10% need tertiary-level care.

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

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What is equity in healthcare means?

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

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

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

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

How India can achieve equity in healthcare?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance– Higher education

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: measures needed to prevent overcrowding of prisons

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the reasons behind overcrowding of prisons?

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

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

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

What can be the way ahead?

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Significant provisions of Indian constitution.

Relevance– Issues related to secularism in India

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

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

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

What are the judicial precedents for state management of temples?

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

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

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

What are issues with the state management of temples?

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward?

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

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

Source: The post is based on the following articles

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

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

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

Relevance: About India-Nepal relations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why China is happy with Nepal’s new PM?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About challenges in India's political neighbourhood.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Polity

Relevance: Role of Governor

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

What does the Constitution say regarding oath?

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

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

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

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

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

Can a Governor refuse to administer the oath?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

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

What are the reasons behind increasing road accidents in India?

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward for road safety in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Our focus, for the next 25 years, should be on **preventative healthcare**. These measures should be introduced in schools at early ages and in community spaces across the country. A greater focus on **immunisation and sensitisation campaigns** would ensure better healthcare for the population.

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Security

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

What is the concept of Multi Domain Operations?

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

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

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

What are the requirements for MDO?

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

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

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

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

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

Should India embrace the concept of MDO?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About restrictions on NGO activities.

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

What are the recent restrictions on NGO activities?

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

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

Why imposing restrictions on NGO activities is not correct?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance– Issues related to panchayat and municipalities.

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

What is the normative basis of local self-governance?

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

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

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

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

What are the issues with local governments in India?

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

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

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

How recent order of Patna High Court is pathbreaking?

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

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

How can the local governments and federalism be strengthened?

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Issues related to development and management

Relevance– Use of digital technology for healthcare sector

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and its components?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: issues associated with Jallikattu

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

What is the issue?

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

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

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

How is the SC examining the case?

The court is examining the case from various perspective.

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

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

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

What were the arguments presented for and against Jallikattu?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the concerns with road safety in India?

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

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

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What are the concerns with women?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What can be the course of action?

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

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

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

Source: The post is based on the following articles

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

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

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

Relevance: About the SC ruling on Fundamental Rights.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should be done to improve free speech?

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

For hate speech, the will of governments and political c

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- India and its neighbourhood relations

Relevance– India and Nepal bilateral relations

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why should India not overemphasise the China factor?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About Article 19 of the Indian Constitution

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

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

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

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

What is the constitutional history of free speech in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the observation of Free speech in India?

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: high number of pending cases in the court

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

What are the findings of the various reports?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How can the government control the litigations?

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: reforms required in political parties

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

How are political parties different from corporations?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the recent trend?

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

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

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

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

24. [Strategic space & diffidence](#)

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

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– External challenges and its management by Indian strategic establishment

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

What are different scenarios around external security environment of India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Impacts of emerging world order

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How the rise of populism is impacting international law?

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

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

26. [Madhya Pradesh HC's resolution to call 'lower courts' as district courts is a welcome step towards ending judicial feudalism](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Madhya Pradesh HC's resolution to call 'lower courts' as district courts is a welcome step towards ending judicial feudalism**" published in **The Indian Express** on **9th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: problems associated with lower judiciary

News: The **High Court of Madhya Pradesh has passed the resolution** that judiciary in all courts other than the High Court shall be referred to as the 'district judiciary' and not as 'subordinate judiciary'. Also, all courts other than the High Court shall be referred to as the 'trial courts' and not as 'subordinate courts.'

The term "district judiciary" is also used by the Constitution (Article 236).

Did the Constitutional Assembly discuss the renaming of the subordinate judiciary?

The issue of naming the hierarchy of courts, especially the "subordinate" courts, was **not discussed** in the Constituent Assembly Debates (**CAD**).

However, discussions on the composition, jurisdiction, and functions of the Supreme Court and high courts were made.

Further, the **official literature on district courts** also does not make any demand or consideration for a name change.

However, the problem of a smaller number of judges in lower judiciary and their independence were discussed by various commissions and reports.

What are the different discussions made related to the lower judiciary?

The **inadequate strength of judges** in district court was discussed by the **120th Law Commission Report**.

It was also **discussed by the Standing Committee** headed by Pranab Mukherjee in its 85th report (2002) which **recommended increasing judge** strength to 50 per 10 lakh people.

Further in 1998, the **Supreme Court directed that the state** should provide for the re-employment of the retiring judicial officer till the age of 62 years in case vacancies in the cadre of the district judge.

However, the Court held the retirement at 60 years as being "**logical**" and "**reasonable**", due to the retirement age of judges of the SC and the High Courts (65 and 62 years respectively).

SC also stated that an **independent and efficient judicial system is one of the basic structures of our Constitution**.

This is because the principles of the rule of law and democracy give all citizens fundamental right to constitutional remedies and **access to the judiciary has been termed as a basic right** by the SC.

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However, research conducted by the Supreme Court Centre for Research and Planning highlighted that **the lower judiciary has an inadequate number of judges** given the workload which act as **hindrance the access to justice**.

What are the limitations of the High Court over the lower judiciary?

The Constitution enacts a hierarchy of jurisdictions but it does not enact hierarchy of justices. Each judge is supreme within the appointed jurisdiction. No judge acting within her jurisdiction is higher or lower.

Further, higher court judges can only direct lower court judges by remaining **under the sphere of judicial review. The Constitution prescribes that the equality and dignity of all justices, and judicial process, is horizontal and not vertical.**

Further, the supervision of high courts extends to posting, promotion, leave, transfer and discipline of the members of the district judiciary. It has complete authority and control over its officers and employees.

However, this authority does not mean that the principle of independence of the judiciary or the democratic rule of law is curtailed.

27. The superbugs are here – and they are resistant to antibiotics

Source: The post is based on an article **“The superbugs are here – and they are resistant to antibiotics”** published in **The Indian Express** on **9th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Health

Relevance: measures needed to tackle AMR

News: Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), also called antibiotic resistance, is a global health challenge and a worrying public health crisis. The WHO has declared it as one of the top 10 health threats facing humanity.

How is AMR caused and what action has been taken by the government?

Read Here: [What is AMR and its causes](#)

Many countries including India have come up with AMR national action plans (NAPs) to tackle AMR.

However, the development and implementation of antimicrobial plans are not adequate. Therefore, other measures are required to reduce and reverse AMR.

What are the measures required to reduce AMR?

Prevention: Disease prevention and wellness are key to public health. Sanitation drives, clean water supply and hospital-driven infection-control programmes are needed to prevent AMR.

Prescribing antimicrobials judiciously: There is also a need to prescribe antimicrobials judiciously and only when they are absolutely needed.

Proper Coordination: There is a need for proper coordination amongst the animal industry and environmental sectors to prevent the unnecessary use of antibiotics in farms.

Robust surveillance systems: A robust surveillance system is needed that allow the detection of resistant pathogens of all kinds in the environment.

Investment in Research and Development: There is a need to invest heavily in research and development through both government and private funding. This will bring new antibiotics which could be an essential component in restoring the balance and ensuring fight against AMR.

However, the profits on these investments are negligible which could be a cause of concern.

Financial incentives: There is a need to formulate new types of financial incentives to measure return on investment and measure profitability of the antibiotic.

28. Imagining the politics of fraternity

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Imagining the politics of fraternity**”, published in **The Hindu** on 9th January, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Indian Polity,

Context: The principle of fraternity is one of the most important principles for keeping the nation together. India must strive hard to uphold this principle.

The Bharat Jodo Yatra led by an opposition party is ongoing. The achievements of the yatra are debatable, however it reminds of the principle of fraternity or Bandhutva Fraternity, which is not merely a value to aspire to, but a foundational principle that should be upheld by all the political forces.

What is the principle of fraternity?

Traditionally there were two ideas of fraternity. However, Indian view was developed during freedom struggle.

Judeo-Christian world view: It seeks to achieve the brotherhood among all men, which is based on the belief that all men are children of God.

Secular idea: It was born out of French revolution. It is a sense of solidarity and brotherhood among those who were opposed to the tyrannical monarchical order.

Indian Context of fraternity:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was the strongest proponent of the idea of fraternity, which was developed during the process of anti-colonial struggle and nation-building. As per him, the absence of fraternity, owing to caste consciousness within Hindu society, was the primary reason for the colonisation of India and the chief hurdle in nation-building.

For Ambedkar, fraternity was the fundamental enabling condition for the realisation of liberty and equality, which could hold India together, instead of laws alone.

Significance of the principle of fraternity

First, it was included in the Preamble as well as in the fundamental duties of our Constitution.

Second, globally extreme social and economic polarisation is promoting xenophobia and racial tensions.

Third, in India too, politically backed incidents of violence are rising. On the economic front, the top 1% have cornered more than 40% of the wealth in 2021; while the poor and middle classes struggle with inflation.

29. Making healthy choice the easier choice

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Making healthy choice the easier choice**”, published in **The Hindu** on 9th January, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Social issues, Health related issues

News: The 2017-18 National NCD monitoring survey reported that 98% of Indians do not take adequate fruits and vegetables and only 59% of adults do adequate physical activity.

What are the reasons behind unhealthy lifestyle of Indians?

- 1) People giving less importance to health.
- 2) Eating unhealthy due to taste and cost consideration.
- 3) Laziness for physical exercise

What are the factors causing unhealthy lifestyle?

Physical, economic, and socio—cultural environments, in which people make their decisions about taking food or doing physical activity, do not support healthy choices.

First, people including children are heavily influenced by food marketing.

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Second, unhealthy products are easily available, priced lower and displayed more prominently in grocery stores.

Third, culturally, our diet is so cereal/pulse-based, that leaves a little space to eat sufficient fruits and vegetables.

Fourth, some of the factors discourage people from doing physical exercise – air pollution, weather (hot-cold-rains), unusable footpaths, lack of parks or, often unsafe and poorly lit parks.

Fifth, industry self-regulation of front-of-pack food labelling has not worked well. Commercial interests like the food industry are powerful interest groups. They would oppose interventions aimed at labelling or reducing salt or sugar.

What should government do?

- 1) Regulating the marketing of foods to children. Many countries have banned or restricted the advertising of food and beverages on children's channels or at times when they watch television.
- 2) Taxing junk food, incentivizing healthier options and subsidizing fruits and vegetables should be considered to tackle the issue of affordability.
- 3) Improving awareness of people about making healthy choices.
- 4) Preventing multiple reheating of oils, lower oil, salt, and sugar use during preparation at the restaurants.

30. UGC guidelines on foreign universities: The University Gimmicks Commission

Source: This post is created based on the article “**UGC guidelines on foreign universities: The University Gimmicks Commission**”, published in **Indian Express** on **9th January 2023**.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Social Issues, Issues associate with education

News: University Grants Commission (UGC) has allowed entry of foreign universities in India through new guidelines. However, there are many issues associated with these reforms that require a proper discussion.

What are the challenges to the success of UGC guidelines on foreign universities?

First, top universities like Princeton, Stanford, Yale and Oxford don't have any branch campuses anywhere in the world, even in the countries with most liberal regulatory environments. Why would they establish their branches in India?

Second, majority of the foreign universities, operating globally, are **not top-tier institutions**. Some of the top tier universities like NYU Abu Dhabi are operating with massive subsidies from the home government. If one checks the C-BERT list that maintains a comprehensive list of international campuses, **most foreign campuses are very small**, with an average size of 300-400 students.

Third, as per the guidelines, UGC will ensure that the **qualifications of the faculty** assigned to India will be the same as those of the faculty in the parent institution. However, if the qualification means that the faculty is to be exceptional like in top universities, they might not take interest as they won't have the economic or lifestyle incentives, unless either their salaries are matched or exceeded.

Fourth, when India has many investors that can create a university similar to foreign ones, **why they are not investing?** The answer lies in the **regulatory uncertainty**. Project like Institutions of Eminence revolution have not picked up due to that.

Fifth, UGC has been looking to standardise the admissions process for all public universities and trying to curb their autonomy as well. **How is it going to protect the autonomy and distinct identity of foreign universities.**

Sixth, guidelines seem to have ignored the **required combination of capital, vision, and human resources** it takes to get a high-end research university.

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31. [Indians abroad: History, spread, remittances](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Indians abroad: History, spread, remittances**” published in **The Indian Express** on **10th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian diaspora

News– The article explains the history, classification, numbers, geographical spread of diaspora. It also explains the remittances sent by them and their involvement in politics of the host country.

What is the history of diaspora in India?

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, thousands of Indians were sent to countries in the east pacific and the Caribbean islands under the ‘**Girmitiya**’ arrangement as **indentured labourers**. They were taken to work on plantations in British colonies, which were reeling under a labour crisis due to the abolition of slavery in 1833-34.

As part of the **second wave of migration**, nearly 20 lakh Indians went to Singapore and Malaysia to work in farms.

The **third and fourth wave** saw professionals heading to western countries. Workers were going to the Gulf and west Asian countries due to opportunities provided by the oil boom.

How can we classify overseas Indians?

Overseas Indians are classified into three categories: **Non-Resident Indians (NRI), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs)**.

NRIs are Indians who are residents of foreign countries. The PIO category was abolished in 2015 and merged with the OCI category.

According to the **MEA**, PIO refers to a **foreign citizen** who at any time held an **Indian passport**, or who or either of their parents/ grandparents/great grandparents was born and **permanently resided** in India as defined in **Government of India Act, 1935**, or who is a spouse of a citizen of India or a PIO.

A separate category of OCI was carved out in 2006. An OCI card was given to a **foreign national** who was eligible to be a citizen of India on January 26, 1950, was a citizen of India on or at any time after January 26, 1950, or belonged to a territory that became part of India after August 15, 1947.

What are the numbers and geographical spread of the diaspora?

According to a report of the **Parliamentary committee on external affairs**, as on December 31, 2021, there were 4.7 crore Indians living overseas. The number includes **NRIs, PIOs, OCIs, and students**.

The countries with **over 10 lakh overseas** Indians include the United States of America, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Kuwait and Canada.

According to the **World Migration Report, by the International Organisation for Migration**, India has the largest emigrant population in the world.

What is the situation of remittances in the case of India?

According to the latest **World Bank Migration and Development Brief**, for the first time, India is on track to receive more than **\$100 billion** in yearly remittances.

The report notes that India, China, Mexico, the Philippines and Egypt in descending order are among the top five remittance recipient countries.

What is the level of involvement of the diaspora in politics of their country of residence?

The vocal **political positions** taken by a section of the Indian diaspora is a recent phenomena. The **Hindu American Foundation**, a Hindu advocacy group based in the US, was set up in 2003.

What are the charges of biases against diaspora?

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The **parliamentary panel report** pointed out that conventions such as the Pravasi Bharatiya Sammelan leaves out a large section of the diaspora that is not wealthy.

It expressed apprehension that low or semi-skilled and blue collar workers may not feel comfortable to participate in the said celebration. **Participation and involvement** should be **more broad-based** by accommodating the vulnerable sections of the diaspora community.

32. A step towards fighting corruption

Source– The post is based on the article “**A step towards fighting corruption**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Important aspects of governance

Relevance– Issues related to corruption

News– The article explains the recent Supreme Court judgement on corruption in public life. It also explains the reason behind corruption by public servants and important aspects of the fight against corruption.

What are notable points of recent SC judgement in Neeraj Dutta v. State (Govt. of NCT of Delhi)?

It lowered the requirement for the **quantum of evidence** to convict persons charged with corruption.

It laid down that even if prosecution witnesses turn hostile, a conviction would be possible. This will be possible if **circumstantial evidence** produced by the prosecution points unmistakably to the guilt of the accused.

The court has directed that infirmities such as **non-availability of the complainant** should impact the prosecution.

What are important aspects to fight against corruption?

There are two aspects to the fight against corruption. The first is the **severity of the law** and its application. The second is the **strength of public opinion** that would help carry forward the campaign for a clean public life.

Deterrence by strong laws works only up to a point. It disregards the fact that the more penalties for criminal behaviour will increase the **quantum of proof** required for conviction.

What are the reasons behind the misdeeds of public servants?

Corruption by public servants can be partly attributed to **political corruption**. No **entitled service** can be obtained without bribing the administrative or political hierarchy.

Jobs are often sold at a price. Many applicants are prepared to pay without a complaint as there is **acute unemployment**.

No approval for construction of a building or for registration of a property is possible without payment of a bribe.

Several public servants involved in this racket cite illegal demands from the **political hierarchy** as the reason for such bribes.

Will the SC judgement be effective in tackling corruption?

It may not **deter** people from corruption.

Corrupt public servants will find other means of covering up their misdeeds. Many are willing to offer bribes to public servants. This **nexus between offender and victim** has become a part of our **ethos**.

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33. [Securing cyberspace for children: How to tackle online child sexual abuse and exploitation](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Securing cyberspace for children: How to tackle online child sexual abuse and exploitation**” published in **The Indian Express** on **10th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable actions of the population. GS3- Basics of cyber security

Relevance– Issues related to childrens

News– The article explains the increasing danger of online child sex exploitation and abuse and its impacts. It also explains the challenges in dealing with online child sex abuse and suggest solutions to handle these challenges.

Why the threat of online child abuse and exploitation has increased in recent times?

Multiple lockdowns during Covid-19 forced children to turn to the internet for education, entertainment and everything. It led to an increase in their average screen time.

This **prolonged online exposure** has increased threats to online safety for children.

The rapidly evolving digital landscape and advances in information technology have given rise to **better encryption services and the dark net**. It has provided a **safe cover of anonymity** to offenders.

What is online child sexual abuse and exploitation and its impacts?

It refers to activities such as the production and distribution of **child sexual abuse material**. It also includes live streaming of **sexual assault of minors**, obtaining **sexually explicit material**. This poses serious harm to children. They experience **psychological stress** such as anxiety, trauma, and depression.

It can also lead to **behavioural changes** like drug and alcohol abuse, self-harm, and lower motivation for academics.

The consequences of online sexual abuse in childhood are **far-reaching**. It may extend into adulthood by creating issues with intimacy and affecting **interpersonal relationships**.

What are the main administrative challenges when dealing with online child abuse?

There exists limited **law enforcement capacities** and gaps in the **legislative framework**.

Lack of awareness and urgency around the issue are other challenges.

There is a lack of workforce in relevant social welfare organisations.

What are the steps taken by the government to tackle online child sex abuse?

It has **improved the mechanism** for reporting online offences against children.

It has also developed **new tools and software** to control and remove the presence of child sexual abuse material on social media and other platforms.

Efforts have also been made to **sensitise** schools and boost the **technological capacity** of law enforcement agencies to further deal with the issue.

What is the way forward to prevent child abuse?

According to the **Model National Response**, there are **six key domains** that should be focussed to effectively address this issue. These are policy and governance, criminal justice, industry, society and culture, research and victim support.

It is imperative to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of **cross-sectoral governance mechanisms** that are set up to **systematise the national response** to child sexual abuse material. The huge backlog of child abuse cases must also be **fast-tracked**.

There is a need to **institutionalise the collection of national-level data** on child sex abuse.

The recent **Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022** can provide an opportunity to meet this exigency.

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There should be further development of **clear mandates** and creation of a **logical framework**. These should define the roles and duties of all relevant **stakeholders** within **standard operating procedures** for investigation.

Continuous dialogue between the industry, government and other collaborators, with a **distinct agenda and division of responsibilities** is necessary. Industry partners must be provided with **suitable training and awareness** of the magnitude of child abuse, along with **proper toolkits and guidance**.

There is need to promote a **systematic and constant approach** to training the judiciary and prosecution on child abuse. It should be centred around **child-sensitive protocols**.

Comprehensive remedies or reparations for victims are important. They need to be handled by a **specialised workforce**.

Basic online safety measures, parental support initiatives and community awareness training can be integrated into existing education programmes.

Existing systems must be evaluated by monitoring and documenting their overall **effectiveness and accessibility**. It should include assessment of relevant hotlines and portals.

Dedicated effort must be made for **ethical and informed media reporting** on relevant cases.

A **collaborative effort** of various institutions across the nation is required to build a safer cyberspace.

Stricter implementation of prevention laws, and **adequate resources** to sustain these efforts is required.

34. [Indian campuses of foreign universities are a win-win for students and institute](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Indian campuses of foreign universities are a win-win for students and institute**” published in **The Indian Express** on **11th January 2023**.

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

Relevance– Higher educational institutions

News– The article explains the recent draft UGC regulations on allowing foreign educational institutions to set up their campuses in India.

Why draft UGC regulations on allowing foreign educational institutions in India is a win-win situation?

These regulations have an **in-built mechanism** to ensure the entry of only the highest-quality institutions. Foreign higher education institutions intending to come to India will be experienced in imparting education. They will have robust **financial resources, integrity, long-term commitment**, and a **better understanding of the venture’s feasibility**.

Campuses of foreign HEIs will attract students from the **Global South**. It will provide an **environment for interaction**.

It will give more viable options to Indian students who opt for **overseas education**. Many students are not able to go for overseas education due to family or financial situations. Foreign HEIs will provide opportunities for students who do not wish to immigrate to stay in India and study at a foreign university.

The **National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration** recently conducted a study to gather reliable information on foreign universities’ priorities regarding establishing their campuses in India. Several universities ranking in the top 200 have expressed their interest in considering India as a destination.

Foreign HEIs will foster **healthy competition** among Indian institutions to better their standards and establish world-class institutions.

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Institutions of Eminence have made considerable progress in **multidisciplinary teaching and research, leveraging technology for effective teaching-learning**, and promoting the **internationalisation of higher education**. They and other institutes in India can be potential partners in **research collaborations** with FHEIs in cutting-edge areas.

How other government initiatives can be helpful for foreign HEIs?

The establishment of foreign campuses will be facilitated through the provisions of the **Foreign Exchange Management Act 1999** and its rules. Foreign HEIs can establish campuses under Companies Act, 2013; Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008; and as a joint venture with an existing Indian entity.

The biggest incentive for FHEIs is that there is no need to keep a **corpus fund** and they can repatriate their funds to the parent university.

The Union budget announced on February 1, 2022, emphasized **foreign direct investment (FDI)** in education.

Following **NEP 2020**, the UGC has been proactively working to **meet the aspirations** of Indian higher education institutes. It is providing them with more **autonomy** and bringing out **progressive regulation**. The draft regulations on FHEIs consider the current and desired stages of **internationalizing Indian higher education**.

How will these reforms transform higher education?

Regulations regarding campuses of FHEIs along with the other recent initiatives like the **joint, and dual degrees** with foreign universities, and the regulations for enabling the Indian universities to open campuses in other countries should not be read in **silos**.

The **cumulative effects** of the enabling provisions must be seen as a catalyst for **transforming higher education** in India.

35. Barking up the wrong tree

Source– The post is based on the article “**Barking up the wrong tree**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Salient feature of Representation of People Act

Relevance– Issues related to electoral reforms

News– The article explains the issue of remote voting by migrants.

Recently, the EC proposed using isolated **remote voting machines** to enable voters who are residents elsewhere to vote in their home constituencies.

What are issues with the proposed remote voting machines?

First, it will have to ensure that all applicants for **remote voting** are able to do so without hindrance, and all applications are **processed fairly** without **selective exclusions**. It is necessary to define under what conditions will remote voting be denied.

It is not sufficient just to define a **protocol**. There is a need to ensure that all applications and the decisions on them are **publicly verifiable**, from both remote and home locations. This can only be done with **verifiable zero-trust technology** that is linked to **digitisation of the electoral rolls**. It requires a **thorough examination**.

Second, it needs to ensure that a person allowed to vote remotely is invalidated for **local voting**. The two lists will be at different locations. So, the correctness will not be easy to demonstrate in a **publicly verifiable** way.

Third, there is a need to decide the place for **consolidation and counting** of both the electronic votes and the VVPAT slips. It needs to decide whether counting happens at the remote location, or at the home constituency after consolidation. In the former case, disclosing the remote voting results will compromise vote secrecy.

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Fourth, there are questions regarding **polling agents** at remote locations.

These problems require considerably more **due diligence**. They will also require a significant shift of emphasis from **designing electronics to ensuring verifiability**.

What are issues with current use of EVM by the Election Commission?

The Election Commission's emphasis on **unverifiable voting machines** has been a long-standing problem.

Software-independence is a necessary condition for verifiability. A **standalone EVM**, whichever way its components are internally connected, cannot be **software-independent**.

The **German Constitutional Court** ruled against EVM use in 2009.

U.S. National Academy of Sciences recommended against pure electronic voting in a public report in 2018.

One method to ensure **software-independence** is to audit the electronic results with a count of the VVPATs. The procedure for doing this is called **risk limiting audit**. Unfortunately, it appears that election results are declared in India without any VVPAT audits.

Even the Supreme Court's direction of auditing five randomly selected EVMs in every Assembly constituency against VVPAT counts appears to be without any **sound statistical basis**.

[36. Japan's national security strategy: Why if Japan goes nuclear, India should welcome the decision](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Japan's national security strategy: Why if Japan goes nuclear, India should welcome the decision**” published in **The Indian Express** on **11th January 2023**.

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

Relevance– India and Japan defence relationship

News– The article explains the recent **National Security Strategy doctrine** releases by Japan

What are the main points of recent National Security Strategy doctrine releases by Japan?

Chinese military power is growing exponentially. In less than a decade, the Chinese nuclear arsenal would match the US and Russia. Expectations are low that the US would have the will or the capacity to bring China to the arms control table.

North Korea is continuing with its **nuclear proliferation programme**. It is perhaps now unstoppable. **Ballistic missile tests** by it have violated Japanese airspace. The mood in South Korea is slowly turning in favour of its own nuclearisation.

Extended deterrence including nuclear weapons is the cornerstone of the **US-Japan alliance**. It allowed Japan to not have its own nuclear arsenal. Now it is no longer possible to continue with it due to the rising Chinese threat. Japan is worried about the **future adequacy** of its alliance with the USA.

It calls for Japan to strengthen the **deterrence and response capabilities** of its alliance with the US. It includes **extended deterrence** by the US that is backed by its full range of capabilities, including nuclear.

It adds that Japan would strengthen its **defence capabilities** to take “**primary responsibility**” for its defence, without excluding support from the US. It will develop **autonomous capabilities** through a **sustained military build-up**, and procure deep strike weapons. These are the green shoots of **strategic autonomy**.

It will invest in the **Indo-Pacific and the Quad**.

What can be inferred from this national security strategy by Japan?

The unstated part is the possibility of **nuclear-sharing** by Japan. If implemented, this may be new to Asia. But, it is a long-standing US practice with its **key NATO allies** in Europe.

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The second unstated option is the possibility of Japan itself acquiring nuclear weapons. The document makes no reference to this. But there are references to the US finding it increasingly difficult to maintain a **free and open international order**.

Why should India welcome the Japanese inclination for nuclear weapons?

India and Japan privileged **nuclear disarmament** as a priority. Their ways are separate. But there comes a time when this priority must be subordinated to the demands of **national security**.

India reached this conclusion reluctantly in 1998. If Japan reaches the same conclusion, it too would have a good reason due to increasing Chinese and North Korean threat. It has **technological capabilities** for that.

A **multipolar Indo-Pacific** can be **truly multipolar** only if Japan is assured of **national self-defence**.

As a **strategic partner** and friend, India should respect the decision of Japan.

37. [Bad and ugly – A Governor’s departure from convention has set off unsavoury events](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“Bad and ugly – A Governor’s departure from convention has set off unsavoury events” published in **The Hindu** on **11th January 2023**.

“The Guvs Are Off – Governors in some opposition-ruled states are keeping bills pending for long, violating constitutional spirit” published in **The Times of India** on **11th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the role of the governor in the assembly.

News: Recently, the Tamil Nadu governor walked out of the Tamil Nadu assembly and also skipped a few portions of the government pamphlet. The other substantive issue is the governor also sitting on bills passed by the legislature.

About the role of the governor in passing bills

Article 200 stipulates that a governor shall “declare” that he/she is giving assent to a bill or withholding consent. Governors can forward a bill to the President for consideration or return a bill with a message suggesting changes. But if the house passes the bill again, the governor has to give assent.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that **legislative power of governors is extremely limited** and that governors are bound by the aid and advice of the cabinet.

However, there is constitutional and judicial silence on how long a governor can keep a bill pending.

Can the governor skip a part of the government text?

According to the constitutional convention, the President or the Governor should not depart from the text, as it is nothing but a statement of policy of the elected government.

Read more: [Kerala Government’s Bills to remove the Governor as Chancellor of State Universities](#)

What should be done?

The events highlight the consequences of a confrontationist attitude on the part of constitutional functionaries. So, in the longer term, the role of the Governor in the country’s constitutional scheme needs a thorough overhaul.

The governor is a key intermediary in the Centre-state relationship. The Constitution gives Parliament and the Union government the upper hand when laws of the state clash with those of the Centre. The governors should aid in maintaining this status quo.

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

38. [Reducing preterm births and stillbirths](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Reducing preterm births and stillbirths**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th January 2023**.

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

Relevance– Child and maternal health

News– The article explains the issue of child mortality caused by preterm births and stillbirths in India. It also explains the scenario of healthcare funding in India.

What are some statistics about child mortality in India?

The ‘**Levels and Trends in Child Mortality**’ report on child mortality by the **United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation** estimates that globally, five million children died before their fifth birthday in 2021.

India’s share in these **child mortalities** was estimated at 7,09,366 under-five deaths; 5,86,787 infant deaths; and 4,41,801 neonatal deaths.

The **Sample Registration System of 2022** showed wide **inter-State variations** in child mortality in India. The **infant mortality rate** in Madhya Pradesh was six-fold of the rate in Kerala. The children in rural parts have much higher mortality rates than their urban counterparts.

What are the challenges that are at the root of child deaths in India?

There are two neglected challenges:

1. **Preterm births**– It means they are born alive before 37 weeks of pregnancy are completed. **Preterm babies** are two to four times at higher risk of death after birth in comparison to those born after 37 weeks of gestation.

India has a high burden of **preterm births**. One in every six to seven births is preterm. Studies have shown that preterm births contribute to one in every six under-five child deaths.

2. **Stillbirths**– A baby who dies any time after 22 weeks of pregnancy, but before or during the birth, is classified as a **stillborn**. Globally, an estimated 1.9 million stillbirths happened in 2021. In 2021, the absolute estimated number of stillbirths in India was greater than the death amongst children in 1-59 months of age.

One of the reasons **preterm births and stillbirths** do not get due attention is lack of **reliable data**. The data on stillbirths and preterm births are scarce. Even at the global level, the first-ever report on stillbirths was released only in October 2020.

What is the way forward to prevent stillbirths and preterm births?

The majority of these births can be prevented by scaling up the **proven interventions** and improving the quality of health services.

The focus must be on increasing **access to family planning services**. There is a need to improve **antepartum services** such as health and nutrition, including the intake of iron folic acid by pregnant mothers. Further providing **counselling** on the importance of a healthy diet and **identification and management of risk factors** is also important.

There is a need for measures to **prevent, detect early and manage** diseases which put mothers at high risk, such as diabetes, hypertension.

Monitoring labour and functional referral linkages and improving the quality of health care services can help in preventing stillbirths.

Data on preterm births and stillbirths need to be better recorded and reported.

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The **maternal and perinatal deaths surveillance guidelines** need to be effectively implemented and the **International Classification of Diseases'** definition for perinatal mortality must be adopted.

India needs to identify the **hot spot clusters** of stillbirths and preterm births for local and targeted interventions.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is needed for **effective health interventions**.

What is the scenario of funding for the healthcare sector in India?

In the **National Health Policy of 2017**, the government had committed to investing 2.5% of the GDP on health by 2025. Even by the best estimate, spending on health is around 1.5% of the GDP. It is among the lowest in the world.

There are multiple reasons why India's health system needs more government funding. Children continue to die from **preventable causes**. Pregnant women do not receive good quality care.

Inequities in the health system impact the poorest and marginalised families. The primary healthcare system is **underfunded**.

39. [Mystery of vanishing monuments: Why we need to think about the way we preserve heritage](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Mystery of vanishing monuments: Why we need to think about the way we preserve heritage”** published in **The Indian Express** on **12th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Architecture from ancient to modern India

Relevance– Preservation and management of heritage

News– The article explains the preservation and management of monuments in India. It also tells about missing monuments.

What does the 324th report of Rajya Sabha's Standing Committee on transport, tourism and culture say about monuments and missing monuments in India?

The primary mandate of the Ministry of Culture is **preservation and conservation** of ancient cultural heritage and promotion of **tangible and intangible art and culture**. The Ministry manages all the **Centrally Protected Monuments of national importance**, through the ASI.

There are 3,693 **Centrally Protected Monuments** and 4,508 **State Protected Monuments** in the country. 92 monuments are missing.

Vigorous efforts to identify the reportedly **untraceable monuments** were carried out by the respective field offices of Archaeological Survey of India. The exercise gave fruitful results and many monuments were traced out. But, there are 24 that have still not been rediscovered.

What are some examples of missing monuments?

Barakhamba Cemetery in Delhi is a missing monument. Barakhamba simply means 12 pillars. It seems to have been in the Nizamuddin area.

Other missing monuments are the **Kos Minars in Mujesar (Faridabad) and Shahabad (Kurukshetra)**. Kos Minars marked out the distance of one kosha and proliferated along the Grand Trunk Road.

What are important questions regarding monuments and its management by ASI?

First question is related to the method of deciding a **national monument**.

The second question is related to **de-notification** of those monuments for which there is no hope?

Another question is related to ASI **capability** to protect national monuments.

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40. [Does the governor have the right to delete portions of his address to the legislative assembly?](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Does the governor have the right to delete portions of his address to the legislative assembly?**” published in *The Indian Express* on 12th January 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: issue associated with the Governor

News: The Tami Nadu Governor has sparked controversies after speaking outside the customary government-prepared address.

What are various constitutional provisions and judgements related to the role of the governor in addressing the assembly?

Constitutional provisions: Under Article 176(2(b)), the governor has the right to address the first session of the House. This address is an integral part of constitutional symbolism.

However, the Constitution has not given discretion to governors in the matter of convening the session of the assembly and Governors have no right to question the purpose of convening the sessions of the House.

Judgements: A five-judge bench of the **Supreme Court** in *Nabam Rebia* (2016) had observed that the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh who advanced the session of the assembly without the advice of the chief minister had exceeded his jurisdiction.

The **Calcutta High Court** in *Andul Gafoor Habibullah v. Speaker, West Bengal Assembly* (1966) held that the governor cannot decline to deliver his address and refuse to fulfil his constitutional duty. Thus, the address under Article 176 is mandatory.

However, the HC also held that when the governor fails to deliver his address under Article 176 and walks out of the House after laying down the address on the table of the House, **will be considered as irregularity not illegality.**

Therefore, the validity of the House proceedings cannot be challenged on the ground of irregularity under Article 212.

The **Calcutta HC in another case** held that the governor has the **right to delete or not read irrelevant portions** which do not deal with the policy of the government.

It observed that the Governor can exercise his discretion in leaving out of his address the irrelevant matter.

Moreover, as per the **British convention since 1829**, the governor must read the full speech as it is basically the government’s statement about which the governor like that of the British monarch has no responsibility.

What can be the implications of the governors editing/deleting the government prepared speech?

Governors editing/deleting the speech may **create a constitutional crisis.**

For example, the governor’s address is defeated when the chief minister refuses to defend the address of the governor leading the House to reject the resolution on the governor’s speech.

This defeat is considered as **a no-confidence motion** and the chief minister needs to resign.

Therefore, such a resignation for something that the government did not include in the ceremonial address but the governor had said on its own is undemocratic. Hence, the governor has no discretion in editing the address.

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41. [Under Constitution, law declared by the Supreme Court is binding on all](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Under Constitution, law declared by the Supreme Court is binding on all**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: judicial review and related issues

News: The Vice-President of India has recently made a statement regarding the power of the court on judicial review. This article discusses the tussle between the center and the court regarding judicial review.

What are the statements made by the Vice-President of India?

He is not happy with the **Kesavananda Bharati judgment of 1973** which gave the idea of the Basic Structure, upheld judicial review and limited the Parliament’s power under Article 368 to amend the Constitution.

He has also criticized the National Judicial Appointments Commission (**NJAC**) judgment through which the SC struck down the law and upheld the collegium system.

What is the stand of the court on the criticism?

Article 141 of the Constitution mandates that a law declared by the Supreme Court is binding on all courts, even the Supreme Court. Therefore, the court is bound to comply with the NJAC verdict and the judgment made was within the law.

Further, **the Parliament is free to bring a new law** on judicial appointments through a constitution amendment but that will also be subject to judicial review.

The SC has also advised the government and constitutional authorities that it is necessary that all follow the law as laid down by the court, else it may have a negative impact on the society and people will follow their will.

Why is judicial review needed?

Kesavananda Bharati verdict had made clear that judicial review is not a means to curb parliamentary sovereignty.

It is only part of a “**system of checks and balances**” to ensure constitutional functionaries do not exceed their limits. **Judicial review** holds an important place in a federal Constitution and it in no way makes the judiciary supreme.

SC in its past judgment has also observed that judicial review is in accordance with the law laid down by the Constitution.

Moreover, the court said that how the Parliament in the past has tried to curb the judicial power of the court through the 42nd Constitution amendment and therefore, there is a need to have checks and balances.

However, **regarding Article 368**, the SC has said that it is only a procedure for amendment of the Constitution. It could not be treated as a power vested in Parliament to amend the Constitution and alter the ‘**basic structure**’ of the Constitution.

42. [Remove Raj From Raj Bhawans](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Remove Raj From Raj Bhawans**” published in **The Times of India** on **13th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Polity

Relevance: issue associated with the Governor

News: The article discusses the changing role of the Governor from the British period to the recent times.

What were the roles of the Governor of the British era?

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Governors of British provinces could overrule elected ministers, make laws and ordinances, restrict proceedings in the legislatures, **dismiss a minister, or even dismiss the entire government and take back the reins.**

They could withhold assent to any legislation according to their will. **In appointing ministers, the governor could choose representatives from any community he wanted.**

However, this changed after the adoption of the Constitution.

What changes were brought in the role of Governors by the Constitution?

Governors were **made nominal heads of state**, with the powers of appointing ministers, summoning the legislature, assenting to Bills, and calling for President's rule.

However, with time, governors became a medium through which the Union could interfere in state politics. **For example**, misuse of the President's rule.

The **Supreme Court in 1994 said** that issues of forming a government had to be settled through **votes of confidence in the state legislature.**

However, even here the governor could influence the outcome of the vote by deciding which party would get the first chance to prove its majority.

Governors have an important role to play in handling political crises and cautioning elected governments while remaining non-aligned with any political party.

However, this has not been the case as it is evident from the tussle between Tami Nadu government and the Governor, Delhi government and the L-G, etc.

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

What can be the way ahead?

The **appointment and removal process of the governor** should change. Today, the Union government enjoys this power which ultimately misuses it.

Therefore, **a new system should be brought** for the appointment and removal of the Governor. Governors **should also be made accountable** to the Union, the state and the Rajya Sabha through their appointments and removals.

43. [Delhi LG has got it wrong, India doesn't need new prisons — it needs prison reform](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Delhi LG has got it wrong, India doesn't need new prisons — it needs prison reform**” published in **The Indian Express** on **13th January 2023.**

Syllabus: GS2- Functioning of judiciary

Relevance– Criminal justice system

News– The article explains the issues related to prison inmates in India

What are the issues faced by prisoners in India?

The criminal justice system is inherently **biased against disadvantaged sections.** The prison inmates include 20.9% SC, 11.24% ST, 35.06% OBC, and 20% Muslims. Further, 25% of the prisoner population is illiterate.

Prison Statistics of India 2021 report of the National Crime Records Bureau show that more than 77% of jail inmates are undertrials and every year this number goes up. The undertrial prisoners in Indian jails registered a 15% increase from 3.72 lakh in 2020 to 4.27 lakh in 2021. The same data set also records 25% of the prisoner population is **illiterate.**

There is a blanket ban on the **voting rights** of prisoners despite India being the world's largest democracy. This includes incarcerated prisoners as well as undertrials. The ban lacks any **reasonable classification** based on the nature of the crime or duration of the sentence.

In other countries such as South Africa, Germany, France, Canada undertrials who are out on bail can enjoy the right to vote.

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The number of **custodial deaths** has registered a 12% increase from 1,887 in 2020 to 2,116 in 2021.

There is a **lack of medical staff** in prisons. On December 31, 2021, the actual strength of medical staff was 2,080. The sanctioned strength of medical staff is 3,497

Instances of **manual scavenging** inside prisons have also been reported in the media.

They are still governed by the **colonial Prisons Act, 1894**, which treats prisoners as sub-par citizens and provides for strict **punishment rather than rehabilitation**.

What is the stand of SC and legal provisions on prisoners?

and The Supreme Court has outlined **three broad principles** regarding imprisonment and custody. First, a person in prison does not become a **non-person**. Second, a person in prison is entitled to all **human rights** within the limitations of imprisonment. Third, there is no **justification** for aggravating the suffering already inherent in the process of incarceration.

In **Hussain and Anr. v/s Union of India (2017)**, the apex court had ordered expeditious disposal of bail applications along the principle of bail being the norm and jail being the exception.

Section 436A of the CrPC stipulates that a person having undergone detention for half time of maximum period of imprisonment is entitled to be released on bail with or without sureties.

What is the way forward to improve the conditions of prisons?

The criminal justice system is based on four pillars — **deterrence, retribution, prevention, and reformation**.

There is a need to **liberalise** the bail system.

44. [Capital stalemate](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Capital stalemate**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues and challenges pertaining to federal structure

Relevance– Issues related to division of powers between centre and states

News– The article explains the issue of continuous tussle between Delhi government and Lieutenant governor over their respective powers.

What are the points of conflict between the Delhi government and Lieutenant governor?

Recently the Lieutenant governor of Delhi appointed 10 aldermen and a BJP councilor to preside over polls.

Main opposition party alleged that the Lieutenant governor had bypassed the tradition of **appointing the senior most councillor** as the presiding officer. Giving **voting rights** to the appointed alderman is in violation of the MCD Act.

There are allegations that the Lieutenant Governor is ignoring the Council of Ministers and issuing orders to the bureaucracy directly on all matters.

What is the authority enjoyed by the Lieutenant governor of Delhi?

The Lieutenant Governor has executive control over only the three reserved subjects of **police, public order and land**. All other subjects lie with the elected government.

The Lieutenant Governor’s authority extends beyond those. She has **control over the bureaucracy**, and can exercise the **power to transfer**. She can **suspend or take any action** against any employee of the Delhi government.

What is the way forward?

The Supreme Court has called for **statesmanship and wisdom** by actors.

The **legal ambiguity** over exercise of power should be removed.

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45. [V-P Jagdeep Dhankhar sparks debate with remarks on Basic Structure of Constitution; what is it?](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“V-P Jagdeep Dhankhar sparks debate with remarks on Basic Structure of Constitution; what is it?” published in the **Indian Express** on **13th January 2023**.

“Jagdeep Dhankhar’s criticism of the basic structure doctrine should ring alarm bells” published in the **Indian Express** on **13th 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 has addressed the 83rd All-India Presiding Officer’s conference. In that, he criticised the Supreme Court once again, for using the doctrine of basic structure to strike down the constitutional amendment that introduced the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act.

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?

The Doctrine of Basic Structure is a form of judicial review that is used to test the legality of any legislation by the courts.

Under this, the Parliament has vast powers to change the Constitution, but it cannot touch certain “basic features” or foundational principles that give the Constitution its coherence or identity, make it what it is. In short, the Parliament can amend, but not destroy the Constitution. In the Kesavananda ruling, the Supreme Court cited several aspects of the Constitution that could be identified as “basic features” of the document but added that it was not an exhaustive list.

For example, judicial review, rule of law, federalism, and democratic republic structure are identified as basic features.

In 2015, while striking down the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, the court held “judicial independence” as a basic feature of the Constitution.

Must read: [Basic structure Doctrine](#)

What is the history of basic structure doctrine?

The origins of the basic structure doctrine are found in the post-war German Constitution law. After the Nazi regime, the German Constitution amended some provisions to protect some basic laws.

What are the criticisms associated with the basic structure doctrine criticised?

The Basic structure is **a)** Not found in the text of the Constitution itself, **b)** Enables the judiciary to encroach on the Parliament’s powers, **c)** Makes “unelected judges” to strike down amendments to the Constitution on the basis of this doctrine. This is “anti-democratic and counter-majoritarian.”

Why the basic structure doctrine is essential for the smooth functioning of the Constitution?

Both the legislature (governed by the majoritarian principle) and the court are an integral part of the democratic framework. These constraints help India to maintain the fine balance that makes democracy work better for the people.

Read more: [Supreme Court’s basic structure doctrine in a new context](#)

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46. The Pee Case: Why India Needs Tort Laws

Source: The post is based on an article “**The Pee Case: Why India Needs Tort Laws**” published in **The Times of India** on **14th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: structural problems with Indian laws

News: The article discusses a recent case of misbehavior with a woman in the flight.

What are the issues?

The accused has been booked under IPC provisions **Section 354** (assault or criminal force on woman with intent to outrage her modesty), **354A** (sexual harassment), **509** (act intended to insult the modesty of a woman), **510** (misconduct in public by a drunken person) and **294** (obscene acts).

The court has also denied the bail on the grounds of outraging the modesty of a woman. However, the offences for which accused has been booked is not appropriate.

Why IPC sections that have been applied on Mishra is not appropriate?

Person has been booked for an offence that is punishable **irrespective of the victim (man or woman)**.

The IPC sections that deal with offences or sexual offences against women **misleads the case and there is no evidence** at all that Mishra’s act was intended as a sexual offence.

This shows there are **structural problems with the Indian laws** and judicial practices. The **concept of tort law is still underdeveloped in India** which misleads these kinds of cases that are less about criminal intentions and much more about negative consequences for the victim.

What is the tort law and how is it applied?

Under **tort law**, a person who is **injured or the aggrieved party is compensated by the payment of damage. The accused is asked for compensation. Tort cases are civil cases.**

Tort law can be applied to damages caused to a person’s health, safety, his environment, his property, his economic interests, or his reputation.

The application of tort law needs to be **applied through common sense**. Every damage caused cannot be considered the grounds for receiving compensation and every case need not be treated as criminal case.

However, **most of the Indian laws do not have tort clauses in it.**

Why do Indian laws not have tort clauses?

One of the reasons behind excluding the tort clauses is **to provide space to the state functionaries**. It is an inappropriate established fact in India that the state and its functionaries cannot do wrong or cause damage.

Thus, India’s Parliament never considered a comprehensive tort law which saved the state from paying compensation to victims. It was left for the judiciary to develop a tort jurisprudence.

Moreover, there are **some laws in India such as** The Environment Protection Act 1986, Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplaces Act 2013 and Motor Vehicles Act 2019 which **have tortious clauses**.

However, building tort into all laws, making it a part of social, governance and legal narratives is missing in India. Some judges have argued for codification of torts, but have not been successful.

Why is there a need to codify tort in India?

If tort is codified in India, cases like Mishra’s can be dealt with more logically and it will also benefit many other victims.

For example, victims of road accidents or those petitioning consumer courts and the complaints related with service providers of government or private.

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What can be the way ahead?

India needs to have tort law like the US has Federal Tort Claims Act that compensates individuals who have suffered personal injury, death, or property loss caused by wrongful act of an employee of the federal government.

However, there is a need for the Indian government to properly write the tort laws specifying the kind of liability and standard of proof, and judges must apply their mind and common sense when hearing tort cases.

47. Myanmar's failed military regime is unsettling the whole region

Source– The post is based on the article “**Myanmar's failed military regime is unsettling the whole region**” published in **The Indian Express** on **12th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- India and its neighbourhood

Relevance– India and Myanmar relations

News– The article explains the internal fighting in Myanmar and its destabilising potential for its neighbouring countries.

What are the internal security challenges faced by Myanmar?

The military regime in Myanmar has failed to establish control over the country .

Ethnic militias have joined hands with **pro-democracy** civilians.They have taken up arms against the military since the February 2021 coup.

The junta's confrontation with these groups is evident in the **Chin state**. For nearly a decade, Chin was one of Myanmar's relatively **peaceful border states**. **Chin National Army** is the armed wing of the **Chin National Front**. It had signed a ceasefire in 2012 with the then military government.

After the coup, the CNF joined hands with the **National Unity Government**, the political leaders of the pro-democracy struggle in Myanmar.

Another ethnic organisation called the Chin **National Organisation** also came up two months after the coup. It has its own armed wing called the **Chin National Defence Organisation**.

Every township in Chin state has its own people's militia called the **Chin Defence Force**.

CNF-CNA headquarters located right on the Mizoram-Chin border, has been training hundreds of volunteers who have signed up to take on the junta.

How does it create security challenges for the neighbouring States of Myanmar?

The Chin state lies in the proximity of the Mizoram side. it also directly threatens the **stability of the entire Northeast region**. Mizoram has given refuge to over 40,000 Chin people. Refugees have crossed over into Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh as well.

Bangladesh has been impacted by the **Rohingya influx**.

Continuous fighting in Kachin near the Chinese border has **security implications for China**.

What is the way forward for stability in Myanmar?

The country's ethnic groups who live along its borders do not trust the military to give them **federal autonomy**.

Peace in Myanmar and along its boundaries will come only with **real democracy**.

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48. [More than just an address](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**More than just an address**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2-Polity

Relevance: Political System

News- The article highlights breach of constitutional convention with respect to special address made by governor.

The **Governor of Tamil Nadu, R.N. Ravi** made constitutional history in the State by omitting certain paragraphs. He departed from the official text of his special address at the opening of the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu for 2023.

What is a special address made by the president and governor?

Article 87 of the Indian Constitution requires the President to make a special address to both Houses of Parliament assembled on the commencement of the first session of each year. **Article 176 requires the Governor** to make a special address at the first session of each year of every State Legislative Assembly and to both Houses wherever the State also has a Legislative Council. The language of these provisions were borrowed from the rules of the House of Commons.

Jawaharlal Nehru, stated that the President’s address is nothing but a **statement of policy** of the government.

The Calcutta High Court, while interpreting this article in **Syed Abdul Mansur Habibullah v. The Speaker, West Bengal Legislative Assembly (1966)**, held that the special address keeps the members informed about the executive policies and legislative programme of the State government.

What does departure from the official text of a special address mean?

When there is an independent power provided under **Article 175**, it is a **serious impropriety** for any Governor (or even the President) to omit several paragraphs from the speech prepared by the incumbent government.

The **Supreme Court** has held that **constitutional conventions** are as much a part of the Constitution as its written text.

These conventions fill the interstices of a written Constitution and enable **effective coordination** between the legislature, executive and the judiciary.

Article 361 of the Constitution gives the Governor complete immunity from any legal action because our founding fathers hoped that Governors would maintain the **highest standards of rectitude and propriety**.

What is the role of the Governor in this regard?

The special address of the Governor is an important constitutional duty. It is performed with the **aid and advice of the Council of Ministers** with the Chief Minister at the head.

The constitutional role of the Governor is that of an **elder statesman** who brings a sense of gravitas to this high office.

The residents of Raj Bhavans are **expected to be above party politics** and should not hamper the functioning of a duly elected State government.

49. [Of metals and rare earths](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Of metals and rare earths**” published in **Business Standard** on **14th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1-Geography,GS2-International Relations

Relevance: Minerals related Distribution of resources across the world

News- The article explains the need to diversify sources of rare earth minerals.

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The news that Sweden has just discovered a large deposit of rare earth minerals sparked off thoughts about “atmanirbhar” in this vital area.

What are the rare earth metals?

Rare earths are a **class of metals**. Their oxides need to be used in small but significant quantities to make electric vehicles, mobile phones and sundry other consumer electronics, besides wind turbines and solar energy units.

Renewable energy, therefore, depends on these metals.

What is the distribution of metals and rare earth metals across the world?

China has a hammerlock on global mining and production of rare earth oxides. It has 44 million tonnes of proven reserves (2021), estimated at **one-third of known global reserves**.

China has a **60% of the world’s market share**.

The **US has a 15-16 per cent market share** and Myanmar (with the help of China) holds around 9.5 per cent. **India has around 1 per cent market share**.

By all accounts, Chinese mining and refining methods of these are fairly carbon-intensive and there have been reports of severe **environmental degradation** caused by Chinese mining practices.

What are the barriers in diversifying supply chains?

The barrier is **really the cost**. Given the scale of the opportunity and enabling policies, supply chains can be diversified if it’s made in sufficient quantities with policy support, it may become globally competitive.

However, if you don’t have domestic rare earths in sufficient quantities, you need to **import from China**. This has hard-to-model implications for geopolitics.

China is also the **dominant player in many other elements** of global energy and electronics supply chains, including solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicle batteries, electric vehicle drive trains, dynamos, alternators, and semiconductors.

What is the way forward?

For other elements, **US** has looked for **additional local reserves**.

Japan has examined the possibility of **undersea mining**

Indeed, many nations have **domestic capacity** and **India aspires to join that club** with its multitude of production-linked incentive schemes.

This means nations can **switch suppliers** at need.

In contrast, rare earths have a single-supplier, and China will remain the **go-to supplier** for the foreseeable future.

50. [Bound supremacy – Parliamentary sovereignty isn’t undone by the basic structure doctrine](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Bound supremacy – Parliamentary sovereignty isn’t undone by the basic structure doctrine**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th 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](#)

How Parliamentary legislation is regulated in India?

Parliamentary legislation is subject to two limitations under the Constitution of India.

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1) **Judicial review**, or the power of constitutional courts to review legislation for possible violation of any fundamental right, and 2) No amendment to the Constitution should have the effect of destroying any of its basic features. This is ensured under two conditions. Such as, a) Under **Article 13**, laws inconsistent with or in derogation of fundamental rights are void, b) **'Basic structure' doctrine** evolved by the Supreme Court in the **Kesavananda Bharati case**. The main purpose of the doctrine is to ensure that some fundamental features of the Constitution are not legislated out of existence.

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

Read here: [Basic structure Doctrine](#)

Why basic structure doctrine is not undermining parliamentary sovereignty?

a) Parliament is sovereign in its domain, but it is still bound by the limitations imposed by the Constitution, b) The basic structure doctrine had helped to save the Constitution from being undermined through the misuse of the parliamentary majority, c) A Parliamentary majority is short-lived, but essential features of the Constitution such as the rule of law, parliamentary form of government, separation of powers, the idea of equality, and free and fair elections ought to be perennially protected from legislative excess.

For changing the basic structure doctrine, a new Constituent Assembly has to come up with another constitution that changes these fundamental concepts. But a legislature formed under the current Constitution cannot be allowed to change its core identity.

51. [A matter of tenure and retirement of PSB chiefs](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"A matter of tenure and retirement of PSB chiefs"** published in **Business Standard** on **16th January 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Government Policies & Interventions for Development**

Relevance: **benefits of raising the retirement age of bank's chiefs.**

News: The Ministry of Finance has issued the extension of the CEO of Bank of Baroda Sanjiv Chadha. He was about to retire this month. The article discusses the need for the increased tenure of the bank's head.

What is the notification issued by the Finance Ministry for the top-level appointment at nationalised banks?

A finance ministry notification in November 2022 stated that the top-level appointment at nationalised banks could initially be for up to five years and extended by another five years.

Earlier, the norm was three years or till the age of 60, whichever was earlier.

Why is there a need to increase the retirement age of a bank's head?

A longer tenure is essential because if the person is not from the same bank, as is often the case, it takes time to get adopted into the culture as every bank is different.

Further, it is also not easy for an executive from a small bank to run a large bank.

Many banks have **young executive directors** (EDs). Therefore, the extension of the tenure will ensure they are around till they are 60 or close to 60.

Moreover, lower retirement age makes the CEOs incapable of looking into balance sheets and cleaning them up because they want to leave the organisation happily and positively.

Therefore, increasing the retirement age would **benefit the performance of CEOs and help banks clear balance sheets.**

Further, it will also **ensure uniformity in the tenure** of whole-time directors of the all-India financial institutions such as Small Industries Development Bank of India (Sidbi), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard), etc.

What can be the way ahead?

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First, there is a need to **frame the qualifying criteria for top posts** in all-India financial institutions to encourage young and deserving candidates.

Second, there is also a need for a **comprehensive promotion policy** for the entire financial sector, including banks, to attract talent.

Third, the whole-time directors' tenure at SBI is capped at five years, irrespective of the age. However, the SBI chairman can remain at the position even after 60, even though the tenure is for three years.

Therefore, the tenure of whole-time directors of nationalised banks should be extended to 10 years. They should be allowed to be in the position even beyond 60, like SBI and like the tenure of a private bank's CEO which is at 70.

Fourth, the new norm should also be extended for the top posts to SBI through an amendment to the State Bank of India Act.

52. [India and the new global order](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India and the new global order**” published in **The Indian Express** on **16th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– India and Global south in changing world order

News– The article explains the importance of the recently held Global South summit for India. It also explains the possibility and challenges for India leadership of Global South.

What is the importance of the Global South summit that was recently convened by India?

The forum is an important effort by India to make **global governance** work for the developing nations. Their concerns do not get sufficient attention in international forums.

The forum has provided **valuable inputs** from the **Global South**. These could facilitate successful conclusion of G20 summit in Delhi

The forum is helpful for India in reconnecting with a **global group of nations**. This group has not been a priority for the **Indian foreign policy establishment** since the **end of the Cold War**. Over the last three decades, **Indian diplomacy** has been focused on **reordering its great power relations, bringing stability to the neighborhood and developing regional institutions in the extended neighborhood**.

What is the case for India's leadership of the global south?

120 odd nations attended the meeting. It underlines the willingness of **Global South** to support **Indian leadership** on addressing the global challenges that have impacted many developing countries.

The crises produced by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian war in Ukraine have had a **devastating and disproportionate impact** on the Global South.

The international context today is not amenable to **major global initiatives**. **Multilateralism** is now in danger due to growing **military tensions among the great powers**. There has been a **breakdown of the world trading rules and the weaponization of global finance**.

The idea of India as leader of the developing world appears to have gained much currency in Delhi.

What are difficulties for India in representing the interests of the global south?

India's own past experience with the **Non-Aligned Movement and the Group-77** developing nations points to the real difficulty of uniting the Global South.

There are **deep economic differentiation and sharp political divisions** among the developing nations.

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India has its own **enduring developmental challenges**, despite its impressive aggregate GDP and growing economic, industrial, and technological capabilities.

What is the way forward for India?

India can't simply be **self-centred**. It cannot abandon its **long-standing equities in the Global South**.

India needs to contribute in more significant ways to **modernising and democratising the global order**.

There is a need for **careful balancing between nationalism and internationalism**. A practical sense of what is feasible in today's world, and a **well-defined crafted hierarchy of Indian priorities** on the global stage is required.

53. [The rules of detachment – ON Military – Politics detachment](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“The rules of detachment”** published in **The Indian Express** on **16th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Issues related to politicisation of military

News– The article explains the recent debate in the US on keeping the armed forces apolitical. It also explains the relevance of this debate for Indian military establishment

Why is there a debate in the US on keeping the armed forces apolitical?

America is facing the threat of **polarisation of its society**. There is increasing **enlistment of military veterans by politicians** for boosting electoral prospects.

America does not require the military to remain **“apolitical”**. It demands a commitment to being **“non-partisan”** in their **professional conduct**. It means that regardless of personal political inclinations, military officers must give the elected civilian leadership their best **professional advice** and execute their lawful orders.

There are risks associated with the president, intent on **politicising the military**. The US President is also the **commander-in-chief** and approving authority for general-rank promotions. He could **manipulate** the process to fill senior military leadership positions with party and **personal loyalists**.

Why does India need to seriously consider this debate in the US?

There exists a **similarity in the challenges** currently faced by American and Indian democracies across **political, societal and military domains**.

In India, military personnel are prohibited from engaging in any kind of **political activity** by Acts of Parliament and service rules. Moreover, they have to take the **oath of allegiance to the Constitution**.

India's armed forces, despite occasional criticism, had followed the **“seniority-cum-merit”** principle for promotion from the pool of C-in-Cs to the post of chief. Promoting the **“senior-most of equals”** obviated the possibility of **political interference** in military promotions.

The present government seems to have moved away from the **constraint of “seniority”**. It has started using an **alternate definition of “merit”** and promoted military officers over the head of their seniors.

This approach faces an **inherent risk**. An appointed officer who considers himself indebted to the political establishment can avoid professional military advice.

An even **greater risk of politicisation** has been created by the **latest rules** framed for selection of the Chief of Defence Staff. Apart from serving and retired chiefs, serving and retired officers of 3-star rank are eligible for the post of CDS. The upper age limit has been fixed at 62 years for all. The retirement age of CDS has been fixed at 65 years.

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In almost all countries, the CDS is chosen from amongst the serving chiefs. Placing 3-star officers equivalent to the serving chiefs ignores the **inherent merit and vast experience** of military chiefs. It impacts the **credibility of our promotion system**.

There is no **methodology** available for assessment of **professional competence**. Selection will be based on **political loyalty and personal preference**. Such **subjective and problematic criteria** can lead to **arbitrariness and politicisation**.

54. This is an 'address' of great constitutional importance

Source– The post is based on the article “**This is an 'address' of great constitutional importance**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues and challenges pertaining to federal structure

Relevance– Position of Governor

News– The article explains the issues related to the Governor of Tamil Nadu in skipping an important and politically significant paragraph in a customary Governor’s address to Members of Assembly. It also explains the different viewpoints about the position of Governor.

The skipped paragraph referred to the **Dravidian model of governance** which has great political and cultural significance especially in Tamil Nadu.

What is the importance of address by the Governor under Article 176 of the constitution?

Article 176 of the Constitution requires the Governor to **mandatorily** address the Members of legislature at the **commencement of the first session of each year** and to inform them of the causes of its summons.

It says that the legislature will discuss the matters referred to in such an address. The “address” here means the **complete address and not a truncated version**.

Here, the Constitution gives a **specific direction** to the House to find time to discuss the contents of the Governor’s address. This underscores the importance the Constitution attaches to such an address by the Governor.

It will become more clear when we consider **Article 175**. It says that the Governor **may address** the legislature, but the Governor’s address under Article 175 is **not a mandatory address** unlike under Article 176. Article 175 does not speak about any discussion of the content of such an address.

The reason behind the Constitution making such a distinction in two addresses by Governor is that the address under **Article 176** contains the **policies and programmes** of the elected government of the State. **Executive accountability** to the elected representatives of the people is the **essence of parliamentary democracy**.

Can the Governor skip certain paragraphs of the address?

Skipping paragraphs of the address would simply mean that the Governor does not approve or agree with those ideas. The address by the Governor under **Article 176** is the address prepared by the government. It does not contain any of the **personal views** of the Governor.

The Governor cannot change a word on his own. So, by wilfully not reading certain portions of the address the Governor has gone against the mandate of Article 176.

What are the other issues related to the office of Governor in current times?

The actions by Governors in some of the Opposition-ruled States have often come under critical scrutiny. They are **sitting on the Bill** passed by the Assembly without exercising any of the options given by the Constitution. It is clearly against the **mandate of the Constitution**.

Article 200 requires the Governor to **either give assent or withhold assent or send the Bill back** to the Assembly for reconsideration. In case, if the Assembly passes it again in the same

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form without any change the Governor **has to give assent** to it. He **can also send** the Bill for the consideration of the President in some rare cases.

Governors have suddenly become **proactive**. They have begun to openly challenge and criticise Chief Ministers and State governments. Some Governors are even holding press conferences to attack Chief Ministers.

What are different viewpoints about the position of Governor?

From **Shamsher Singh (1974) to Nabam Rebia (2016)**, the Supreme Court has consistently held that Governors can act only on the **aid and advice** of the Council of Ministers. He cannot exercise any executive powers **independently** ignoring the elected government.

The Supreme Court had in **Shamsher Singh** said, “The Constitution does not aim at providing a **parallel administration** within the State by allowing the Governor to go against the advice of the Council of Ministers.

B.R. Ambedkar said in the Constituent Assembly: “If the Constitution remains in principle the same, then the Governor should be a **purely constitutional Governor**. It should not have power of **interference in the administration** of the province.”

55. Election Commission’s initiative to enfranchise migrant voters is a step in the right direction

Source– The post is based on the article “**Election Commission’s initiative to enfranchise migrant voters is a step in the right direction**” published in **The Indian Express** on **17th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Salient feature of Representation of People Act

Relevance– Issues related to electoral reforms

News– The article explains the issue of remote voting for the migrant population of the country.

What are the issues faced by migrants in enjoying their right to vote?

Migrant workers, especially circular or short-term migrants are some of the least represented groups in the voting process.

There is **no deliberate denial of the right to vote** for them. But, they **lack access to vote**. The Supreme Court, in a series of cases, has interpreted the **freedom to access the vote** as within the ambit of **Article 19(1)(a)**.

One survey shows that only 48% voted in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections when the national average was 59.7 per cent.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, major sender states such as Bihar and UP had among the lowest voter turnout rates at 57.33 per cent and 59.21 per cent respectively. The national average was 67.4%.

What is the status of migrants in India?

According to the **2011 Census**, the number of internal migrants stands at 450 million. 26% of the migration occurs **inter-district** within the same state, while 12% of the migration occurs **inter-state**.

Both official and independent experts admit that this number is **underestimated**. Short-term and circular migration could be 60-65 million migrants.

What are the reasons behind the lack of political representation for migrants?

The root cause of the migrant voters issue is that the individual’s right to vote is conditioned by a rather **strict residency qualification**.

In the survey report, it was found that “close to 60% of respondents had missed voting in elections at least once because they were away from home seeking livelihood options”.

According to a 2012 study, 78% of migrant voters have voter cards for their home constituency. Most cannot commute to their home states on polling day.

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Many migrant voters may not be as intensively involved in the **political affairs and interests** in their host locations as they are in their home locations.

What is the way forward?

Section 60(c) of the RPA, 1951 empowers the Election Commission **to notify classes of voters** who are unable to vote in person at their constituencies because of **physical or social circumstances**. It should be in consultation with the government. Once notified, the voters are eligible for the **Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System**.

EC should find a **technological solution** which is **credible, accessible and acceptable** to all stakeholders

What are the steps taken by ECI to ensure voting rights for migrants?

The Election Commission had earlier formed a **“Committee of Officers on Domestic Migrants”** to address this issue. The Committee’s report submitted in 2016 suggested a solution in the form of **“remote voting”**.

The Election Commission has now proposed the use of remote voting for migrant workers. A **modified version of the existing model of M3 EVMs** will be placed at remote polling stations. **The Electronic Corporation of India Ltd.** has already developed a prototype of a Multi-constituency Remote EVM.

56. [Because Both Rich And Poor Countries Deserve Good Health ...](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Because Both Rich And Poor Countries Deserve Good Health ...”** published in **The Times of India** on **17th January 2023**.

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

Relevance– India vision of global health cooperation

News– The article explains the Indian priorities for global health architecture at G20.

India’s vision of a healthier globe emanates from the philosophy of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam that translates into One Earth, One Family, One Future**.

What are the priorities of India for Global Health Architecture at G20?

1. Strengthen national capacities:

The first is strengthening **national capacities** to prevent, prepare for and respond to major outbreaks.

The agenda will include a **One Health approach to antimicrobial resistance**.

It advocates for **partnering with multiple organisations** like WHO, World Bank, G7, Access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator. This effort will attempt to **synergise existing strengths and identify bottlenecks** in the system.

It calls for pandemic countermeasures that are **affordable, equitable and universal in access**. G20 India Health Track aims to facilitate **seamless integration** towards a **global health emergency architecture**.

2. Strengthen pharma cooperation:

Indian generics are valued across the world. In FY 2022, pharma products worth \$24. 47 billion were supplied to 200 countries.

India continues to provide **affordable HIV drugs and anti-TB generics** to several LMICs. India’s role in addressing **life-saving vaccine inequity** has been appreciated worldwide.

It provided critical doses to more than 100 countries during the most difficult phase of Covid through the **‘Vaccine Maitri’ initiative**.

The government has introduced **production-linked incentive schemes** for strengthening the pharma sector. It has planned **Bulk Drug Parks and Medical Device Parks**.

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India's G20 presidency proposes to address the gaps in the **availability, accessibility and affordability** of medical countermeasures.

It shall continue to prioritise **global networks for R&D and manufacturing** for medical countermeasures.

3. Digital solutions

The global Covid experience has amply demonstrated how digital technologies can help in remote **data capture, medical diagnosis and virtual care**.

Millions of citizens used the **CoWin app** to access vaccines. **Tele-consultation** proved to be life-saving during the pandemic.

GoI's free telemedicine service, **eSanjeevani**, has recently crossed a remarkable milestone of 90 million tele-consultations.

India is marching towards **universal health coverage** through initiatives such as Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY backed by technology to make it **portable, scalable and paperless** across states. **CoWin** has been shared with several countries as a **digital public health good**.

The collective efforts of G20 members will help create an ecosystem that provides **open access** to several LMICs for more **equitable healthcare**.

India plans to draw a **framework for the Global Initiative on Digital Health** and harness the potential of **artificial intelligence** in building more **resilient infrastructure**.

57. [Why retaining talent in India will require more than foreign campuses](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Why retaining talent in India will require more than foreign campuses**" published in **The Indian Express** on 17th January 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: measures needed to retain Indian talent

News: Government is planning to open doors for campuses of foreign universities in India. However, highlights of the different reports show that simply allowing foreign campuses in India would not be enough to retain Indian talent.

What are highlights of different reports?

US State Department: According to the data compiled by the US State Department, an increasing number of Indian students studying in the US are staying back after their degree to join that country's workforce.

In 2021-22, nearly 35 per cent of the 1.99 lakh Indian students in American universities enrolled in the **Optional Training Programmes** that allow foreign students with F-1 visas to join paid or voluntary work for up to three years in the US.

OECD report: According to an OECD report on international migration patterns, Indians studying in economically developed countries are the most likely among all foreign students to join the local workforce.

The transition rates from study permits to work permits were far higher in Indians compared to the Chinese.

The report for 2021-22 showed that 38 per cent of Indian students in American campuses study mathematics and computer sciences due to the increase in demand globally for skills related to digital technology, data analysis and cyber security.

What can be the way ahead?

Bringing foreign campuses of prestigious foreign universities may not be enough to retain talent in the country. Government and industry bodies also need to come with **reforms in education along with the job market**.

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58. [Balance of powers The constitutional bedrock should stay untouched](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Balance of powers**

The constitutional bedrock should stay untouched” published in the **Business Standard** on **17th 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.

Prior to his comments, Lok Sabha Speaker used the same conference to say that the judiciary should “confine [itself] to its limits prescribed in the Constitution.”

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 is the status of the Basic structure Doctrine now?

-Neither the Kesavananda Bharati judgement nor those that have come after have provided a consistent view on what features this basic structure might have.

-Many subsequent judgements have relied heavily on this doctrine and it is now part of settled law.

What should be done?

Supreme Court and some of the high courts had in the past roamed into the realm of issues that might more properly be decided by the legislature or the executive. But that has to be corrected on a case-by-case basis. Hence, Judicial overreach cannot be the reason to reverse the Basic structure doctrine.

The collegium system has problems of opacity and lack of accountability. It should be addressed but not by allowing the executive to be part of the system. A just and sustainable solution is the need of the hour.

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

59. [New free foodgrain scheme as an illusion, doublespeak](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**New free foodgrain scheme as an illusion, doublespeak”** published in **The Hindu** on **18th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues related to poverty and hunger. GS3- Food security

Relevance– Food security Act and related schemes

News– The article explains the recently announced new version of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana.

Under the new avatar of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, NFSA beneficiaries will receive five kilos of free food grains every month in 2023.

What is the difference between the earlier format and the new format of the scheme?

The only difference is that now a family of five can collect 25 kg for free. Earlier, under this scheme, they get 25 kg free under the PMGKAY and 25 kg at ₹3 under the NFSA.

So, a family will now have to purchase the remaining 25 kg from the market at the cheapest possible price of ₹450. It implies an additional expense of ₹375 to their monthly budget.

What are the issues with PMGKAY?

Election angle– The latest scheme seems **politically motivated** to appeal to voters in nine States that go to polls in 2023.

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The Indian political landscape is impacted by **ethnic heterogeneity and increasing electoral competition**. In this scenario, all political parties prefer to differentiate themselves based on such **patronage politics**.

More than 20 central government programmes have been named or renamed to credit the 'Pradhan Mantri'.

Exclusion related issues– The PMGKAY lacks **universal coverage**. The ration records have not been updated since the **2011 Census**. At least 100 million beneficiaries, especially children born in the last decade, are missing from ration.

As per estimates, more than 40% of India's population is **currently excluded** from both the NFSA and PMGKAY.

The most **marginalised castes and communities**, especially migrants, sex workers, the homeless and transgender persons are often without NFSA ration cards.

Undermining MGNREGA–

The scheme is being systematically undermined by **acute Budget cuts, delayed payments and technological hurdles**. In the period 2022-23, only 57 million households received NREGA work unlike 73 million last year.

[60. The illogical rejection of the idea of South Asia](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“The illogical rejection of the idea of South Asia”** published in **The Hindu** on **18th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- India and its neighbourhood- Relations

Relevance– Regional cooperation in South Asia

News- **The article explains the challenges and obstacles for regional cooperation in South Asia. It suggests the solution for boosting regional cooperation in the region.**

What are the main points of a recent World Bank study on air pollution in South Asia?

It concludes that about two million people die prematurely in South Asia each year. Particulate measure concentrations put **nine South Asian cities among the world's top 10 worst** affected by air pollution.

In Bhutan, the average **PM_{2.5} concentration** from 2018-2020 was three times **World Health Organization-prescribed limits**.

The solution to the problems of air pollution lies in a **“whole of region” approach**. South Asian countries should begin talks between scientists, officials and leaders to create a mechanism for the **cooperative management** of air pollution.

What are the challenges faced by the South Asian region?

Climate change crisis led to floods in Pakistan. The **Ukraine war** has increased the cost of procuring energy, grain, fertilisers.

There are chances of persistent **global economic recession**. South Asia is facing threats from variants of the **COVID-19 virus, terrorism**, especially arising from the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

The Region has failed to build a **regional defence** to the issues arising from **Russia's invasion of Ukraine and NATO sanctions, trade ban and weapons stockpiling**. South Asia has missed the chance to build an **energy “cartel”** that can command a better price for the region.

Bangladesh, Pakistan and India buy more than 50% of their liquefied natural gas through the spot market. It is an indicator of their **vulnerability to global energy trends**.

What are the obstacles for regional cooperation in South Asia?

Pakistan has refused talks with India. It has missed out on being part of the **South Asia energy grid** that is boosting **regional connectivity** within **BBIN grouping**.

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India and Pakistan continue to hold up the **SAARC Summit** for nearly a decade. If New Delhi can virtually hold a special meeting for the “**Global South**”, there is no reason why it cannot convene or participate in a regional dialogue.

They have missed opportunities for **regional cooperation in health security**. Although, India has worked bilaterally with most of its neighbours to provide COVID-19 medicines.

61. In light of China-Russia alliance and Ukraine conflict, India and the new Eurasia

Source: The post is based on an article “**In light of China-Russia alliance and Ukraine conflict, India and the new Eurasia**” published in **The Indian Express** on **18th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: changing relations between Asia and Europe

News: The article discusses the changing geopolitical scenario between Asia and Europe.

How is the geo-politics between Asia and Europe changing?

Japan – The PM of Japan is determined to build strong military partnerships with Europe. He has also said that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific is indivisible.

South Korea – it is also joining the party by raising its profile in Europe. **For example**, it is selling major weapons platforms in Poland.

Australia – It has joined the US and UK in the AUKUS arrangement, and is equally eager to bring Europe into the Indo-Pacific.

Together Japan, South Korea and Australia are bridging the divide between Asia and Europe which was once seen as separate geopolitical areas.

Moreover, the partnership between **Asia and Europe has increased by** Russia’s war in Ukraine and due to the alliance between Russia and China. Thus, leading to the emergence of a new Eurasia.

How did the ties between Russia and China help in the emergence of new Eurasia?

Putin signed an agreement with China declaring an alliance “without limits” and no “forbidden areas”.

China in the past tried to make an alliance with Europe but was unsuccessful in that. So, it joined Russia by blaming NATO for the crisis in Ukraine.

However, their alliance resulted in strengthening the Western alliance in Europe and emergence of a **new kind of Eurasia** — an alliance between China’s East Asian neighbours and Russia’s West European neighbours.

Further, **the US invited key Asian partners to participate at the NATO** summit held in June last year.

The prime ministers of Australia, Japan and New Zealand as well as the president of South Korea joined the summit. **This was the first time that Asian leaders joined NATO deliberations.**

It is expected that NATO’s engagement with Indo-Pacific issues and East Asia’s engagement with European security will continue to be new features of Eurasian geopolitics.

Moreover, the US is eager to encourage its partners, including India, to build their capabilities and strengthen regional balances of power in Europe and Asia.

How did the alliance between Russia and China impact Japan?

Japan, which has faced a bilateral maritime territorial dispute with China and looking at China’s expansionary policies, **changed its security policy.**

It has **planned to double annual defence spending** over the next five years, and **build a large missile arsenal** to deter China and North Korea.

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It also wants to **revive its domestic defence industry** as well as build military capacities on the Chinese border by exporting arms.

What are the implications for India due to the emergence of new Eurasia?

The emergence of new Eurasia **brings challenges for India**. Earlier, India had a maritime coalition (the Quad) in the Indo-Pacific and at the same time had continental coalitions led by Russia and China.

However, **the conflict between the US, Europe, and Japan on the one hand and China and Russia on the other** will bring challenges for India in balancing its relation with these countries. Further, the **alliance between Russia and China** will bring more challenges to India towards its security policies.

However, in presence of these events the relation of India with the US, Europe, Japan, South Korea and Australia have become stronger.

[62. India's new proposal for migrant voting](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "India's new proposal for migrant voting" published in **The Hindu** on **18th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Electoral Reforms in India

News: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced that it has developed a prototype for a Multi-Constituency Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM). However, the ECI could not demonstrate a prototype of RVM.

Functioning of Present EVMs

The use of **EVMs** started in **1992** and it is in use in all Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections since 2000.

The latest version M3 model started manufactured from 2013. From 2017, the use of VVPATs has become universal in elections.

[Read more](#)

Concerns associated with EVMs

EVMs authenticity should be machine-independent, or software and hardware independent. It means, that even if the voting machine is tampered, the same should be detectable in an offline audit.

Presently **VVPAT** is the mechanism to ensure the above. However, it has its own set of problems as per as per **Former IAS officer Kannan Gopinathan**.

VVPAT printout appears behind the **VVPAT's** glass for seven seconds. it does not mean they have verified it. Presently, if a voter gets a wrong slip, she/he can test vote in the presence of an election officer. But if the test vote is correct, the voter can be penalised or even prosecuted.

Considering the fact that VVPAT generate voting slips, it has to be refilled with slips, which requires it to be connected to a laptop. It questions the **ECI's** claim that the **EVM-VVPAT** system is not connected to any external device.

Mr. Gopinathan states in his report that a fixed number of votes cast at the beginning of the polls in each polling station to know its proper functioning. But a hack can easily bypass the first few votes, thereby preventing detection of foul play.

Is **RVM** different to **EVM**?

The EC states in its concept note that the Multi-Constituency **RVM** for migrant voting will have the same security system and voting experience as the EVM. Therefore, it will have similar challenges.

Second, the commission reports that RVM can handle multiple constituencies (up to 72) from a single remote polling booth. It will have an Electronic dynamic ballot display instead of fixed

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ballot paper sheet. This would raise questions about how these new devices communicate with each other.

Third, RVM will present logistical and administrative challenges besides the technical ones.

63. Democide, step by step

Source– The post is based on the article “**Democide, step by step**” published in **The Indian Express** on **18th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance– Democracy and its different forms

News– The article explains the challenges and threats to democracy in recent times.

What are challenges before democracy in current times?

Inflation and middle class anxiety is increasing. **Breaking party systems, Populism and demagogues** are creating threats for democracy. There is increasing **bigotry, religious intolerance, and media untruths**.

There has been a spate of **violent attacks against elected governments**. Washington witnessed a well-organised mob assault on the Capitol Hill by thousands of protesters.

In Frankfurt, a 20,000-strong **network of far-right extremists known as Reichsbürger**, was arrested on suspicions of leading a plot to storm parliament and violently overthrow the elected government.

In Brazil, thousands of **pro-Bolsonaro citizens** invaded and occupied the Three Powers Square.

What are threats to the destruction of democracy?

Democracy can be destroyed in **multiple ways, in different tempos**. There’s no single Iron Law for it.

Democracy can perish more gradually through **high-level political plots and behind-the-scenes manoeuvrings**. The military coup against the elected governments of Egypt, Myanmar, Chad, Mali, Guinea and Sudan during the past decade are examples.

Then there is the **populist road to destruction of democracy**. It is slower destruction. **Populist demagogues** take years to win out, to prove that ballots can be used to ruin democracy just as effectively as bullets.

The **cases of Hungary and Serbia** suggest that around a decade is required for populist governments to have ruinous effects on **democratic institutions**.

Democracies can perish in still other ways, and even more gradually. Different explanations of destruction of democracy neglect **civil society and environmental foundations** on which any given democracy rests. Democide can happen through the slow-motion **convergence of social deprivation and environmental decay**.

The slowest form of democide is the most lethal. It happens when citizens and their chosen representatives become **victims of thoughtlessness**. It stops them from seeing **extreme weather events and other environmental catastrophes** that breed power grabs and get people used to emergency rule.

What is true democracy?

Democracy is much more than **pressing a button on a ballot paper**. It goes beyond the **election results, majority rule and lists of minority rights**. It can not be reduced to **lawful rule** through independent courts or attending local public meetings.

Democracy is a **whole way of life** that has **delicate geo-social foundations** that can not be ignored.

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64. [New rules on online gaming](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**New rules on online gaming**” published in **Indian Express** on **18th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 –

News: Recently, Union Ministry of Electronics and IT released the draft rules for online gaming for public consultation.

[About the new rules](#)

Need for new rules?

India’s share of the global online gaming industry is currently just 1 per cent. However, it is expected to rise at a very high pace.

According to industry estimates, in 2020, the worth of India’s online gaming industry was around \$1.8 billion. With a 38 per cent compounded annual growth rate (CAGR), the industry is expected to grow to \$5 billion by 2025.

There are about 400 million online gamers in India and their numbers are expected to grow to 450 million by 2024.

The self-regulatory approach could help attract investments that has, been very subdued due to the variety of conflicting legal positions across states.

What more can be done?

The regulatory approach will have to target the menace of offshore gambling platforms and illicit entities that advertise their products in several media. The onus is on the SROs to ensure a healthy ecosystem for online gaming.

65. [Admonishments that endanger the Constitution](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Admonishments that endanger the Constitution**” published in **The Hindu** on **19th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian constitution and Basic structure

Relevance– Working of the constitution

News– The article explains the basic structure and its importance for Indian constitutional structure. It also explains the recent attack of judiciary by executive

What is the basic structure?

The judgment is widely recognized as a **milestone in India’s history**. It held that Parliament’s power to amend the Constitution was **not plenary**. Any change that damages the **basic structure of the constitution** would be declared void.

What is the recent attack on the judiciary by the executive and why is it not healthy criticism?

Much of this criticism has been aimed at the **functioning of the collegium**. The Union Minister of Law and Justice, and Vice President have repeatedly doubted the Court’s judgment in 2015, in which it struck down NJAC.

Mr. Dhankhar claimed that the striking down of the NJAC had **no parallels in democratic history**. In a democratic society, the **basic of any basic structure** is **supremacy of people, sovereignty of parliament**.

He said that the **ultimate power** is with the legislature. Legislature also decides who will be there in other institutions. All institutions must confine themselves to **their domains**. One must not interfere in the domain of others.

Genuine criticism of the Collegium’s functioning ought to be welcomed. But the Government confirmed in Parliament that it has no plans to implement any **systemic change** in the way we appoint judges.

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The Government itself has done little to **promote transparency** in the process. Therefore, the present reproach is **unprincipled**. It is an attempt at **subverting the judiciary's autonomy**.

Why is basic structure the foundation of the constitution and inherent part of it?

India's Constitution comprises a **set of principles** that together give it an identity. The Constitution is a product of a **collective vision**. That vision was built on **distinct but interwoven ideals**.

These ideals consist of **rule of law, Westminster parliamentary form of governance, separation of powers, independence of judiciary and federal structure**. These cannot be amended as they would change the **fundamental pillars of the constitution**.

In **Minerva Mills vs Union of India**, SC held that Parliament too is a **creature of the Constitution**. Therefore, it can only have such powers that are expressly vested on it.

If those powers are unlimited, it would cease to be an **authority under the Constitution**. It would become **supreme over it**, because it would have power to alter the entire Constitution including its basic structure.

SC in the **Keshvananda Bharati case** gave the interpretation of the word **"amendment"**. The dictionary definition of "amendment" means **"minor change or addition designed to improve a text"**.

66. [Look Who's Feeding Pendency](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"Look Who's Feeding Pendency"** published in **The Times of India** on **19th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Functioning of judiciary

Relevance– Issues impacting the justice delivery

News– The article explains the issue of judicial delays and pendency of cases in courts of India. Over 4 crore cases are pending in the subordinate judiciary, apart from 56 lakh in HCs and about 70,000 in SC.

Government has proposed engaging lawyers as judges and bringing back retired judges as 'ad hoc' judges as **out-of-the-box remedies** to tackle this issue

What are three important factors for the huge pendency of cases and delays in the judicial system?

Adjournment– **Mechanical adjournment** at all tiers of the judiciary is the single biggest contributor to the pendency of cases.

Procedure for adjournment is not codified in our statute book. Adjournments are asked and given **casually**.

A faint attempt was made when the **Civil Procedure Code** was amended exactly two decades ago. It says that each adjournment decision should **specify the reason** for the adjournment. It should not exceed **three adjournments** before the verdict is pronounced. These rules are not **followed in true spirit**.

Admission– Admissions of new cases are also responsible for long pendency. Admission rate in SC is a healthy 11%, HCs are too **permissive**. HCs admit almost all cases brought before them. There are **no rules for admission**.

Appeal– Appeals is the third factor contributing to judicial delays. The government is the biggest culprit here. Bureaucrats opt for appeal against every single order to save their **own reputation and to delay losses**.

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What is the way forward to resolve the issue of judicial delays?

The issues related to **frequent adjournments, admissions and appeals** must be addressed. Constitutional courts must first **practise prudence** on the three 'A's and then ensure it percolates down to magistrate courts.

Every adjournment should be treated as a **minor judicial decision** requiring a written reason. As a result, the rate of adjournments will reduce.

Judges should disallow adjournments at least in cases where either of the parties enjoys an **interim order of stay or injunction or status quo**.

67. Check, do not cross – Government should work towards systemic reform; not attack the judiciary

Source: The post is based on an article "**Check, do not cross – Government should work towards systemic reform; not attack the judiciary**" published in **The Hindu** on **19th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: issues associated with the Collegium system

News: The Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju has written to the Chief Justice of India to request that the executive be given a role in the appointment process of judges, which now is being handled by a Collegium of judges.

What are some demands of the central government asked in the letter?

As per the report, the Minister wants the formation of a **search-and-evaluation committee**, with Government representatives. It will suggest names to the collegiums in the High Courts and the Supreme Court for appointments.

Government is also demanding for a representative of the Union government in the Supreme Court collegium, and a state government's representative in the High Court collegiums.

Moreover, the Law Minister has repeatedly been highlighting the flaws of the collegium system.

What has been the stand of court regarding the demand of the government?

The Court has earlier said that **the government at any time can come up with law** which is more transparent, independent and establishes a neutral mechanism in the appointment of judges and which does not affect the independence of the judiciary.

Till a new law comes, the government has to abide by the law of the land, that is, the present system of appointments through the Collegium.

What can be the course of action?

The government has often tried to delay the appointment of judges by deliberately delaying action on recommendations; ignoring reiterated names even after multiple reconsiderations; and carrying on a campaign to delegitimise the institution.

However, this is not acceptable as each and every democratic institution has its boundary and limitation under which it functions.

Therefore, a **system of checks and balances** that prevents any one branch gaining the upper hand is essential for democratic functioning.

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

Source: The post is based on the article “**Check, do not cross – Government should work towards systemic reform; not attack the judiciary**” published in **The Hindu** on **19th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the process of appointing judges.

News: Recently, Union Minister for Law and Justice has written to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) “suggesting” that a nominee of the government should be included in the collegium that makes recommendations for the appointment of judges.

The Minister also wants the formation of a search-and-evaluation committee, with Government representatives, to suggest names to the collegiums in the High Courts and the Supreme Court for appointments.

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

Why does the government want to change the process of appointing judges?

Ever since the formation of the [National Judicial Appointments Commission \(NJAC\)](#) Act, the government wants to be part of selecting judges. But the 2015 judgment of a Constitution Bench struck down the formation of a National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC).

Since then, the government is frequently questioning the collegium system by highlighting some of its acknowledged flaws. Further, the government also doing **a)** deliberately delaying action on recommendations; **b)** ignoring reiterated names even after multiple reconsiderations; and **c)** carrying on a campaign to delegitimise the institution.

What should be done?

The Collegium system needs reform. This can be done by infusing more transparency and independency in the process by making a fresh legislative effort to establish a neutral mechanism.

A system of checks and balances that prevents any one branch gaining the upper hand is essential for democratic functioning.

69. [Judging a decade of the POCSO Act](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Judging a decade of the POCSO Act**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of population. GS1- Social empowerment

Relevance– Issues related to crime against children and adolescents

News– The article explains the working of POCSO Act in India and issues faced in implementing its provisions.

What is the POCSO Act?

It was enacted in consequence to India’s ratification of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992**. The aim of this special law is to address **offences of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children**.

What are some positive points about the POCSO Act?

A significant feature of the POCSO Act is its **gender-neutral nature**. In Chhattisgarh, male child victims accounted for about eight in every 1,000 POCSO cases.

There is **sufficient general awareness** about reporting of cases of sexual exploitation of children by individuals and institutions. **Non-reporting** has been made a **specific offence** under the POCSO Act.

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The storage of **child pornography material** has been made a new offence.

The **offence of 'sexual assault'** has been defined in **explicit terms** unlike an abstract definition of 'outraging modesty of a woman' in the Indian Penal Code.

What are the issues related to implementation of the POCSO Act?

Investigation– A large part of the investigation of offences under the Act is still **guided by the CrPC**.

The POCSO Act provides for recording the statement of the victim by a woman sub-inspector at the child's residence or place of choice. But it is practically impossible to comply with this provision when the number of women in the police force is just 10%.

There is a provision to record statements using **audio-video means**. Supreme Court in **Shafiq Mohammad vs The State of Himachal Pradesh case** emphasised on the need for preserving the scene of crime of heinous offences using audio-video means.

But, there is **absence of proper infrastructure** to ensure the **integrity of electronic evidence**. Therefore, **admissibility of evidence** recorded using any audio-video means will always remain a challenge.

Another provision mandates the recording of the statement of the female victim by a judicial magistrate. Such statements are recorded in most cases. But, judicial magistrates are neither called for **cross-examination** during trial nor are those who retract their statement punished. In such a scenario, such statements get nullified.

The **medical examination** of a girl child is conducted by a female doctor. But, there are instances where the banned **two-finger test** is still in use. **Infrastructure of FSL** is in poor condition. Many cases have a charge sheet without an accompanying FSL report.

Age determination– The age determination of a juvenile accused of crime is guided by the **Juvenile Justice Act**. No such provision exists under the POCSO Act for juvenile victims. The investigating officers (IOs) continue to rely on the date of birth recorded in **school admission-withdrawal registers**.

In most cases, parents are not able to defend in the court. **Age estimation based on medical opinion** is generally so wide in scope that in most cases minors are proved to be major. Thus, the POCSO Act has made no difference in investigation when it comes to proving juvenility.

Period of investigation– The time mandated to complete investigation of rape is **two months**. It has resulted in two significant changes on the field. One, there is **much pressure on the IOs** to submit a charge sheet in two months irrespective of the stage of the investigation.

The IOs do not want to invite **internal punishment** as the Ministry of Home Affairs supervises POCSO cases through the CCTNS and State police headquarters. Thus, the focus is largely on **completion of investigation** in two months irrespective of quality.

Second, if a charge sheet was not put up in **90 days of the arrest** of the accused, the accused is granted bail. Now, when a charge sheet is put up in 60 days of the FIR, the accused may **seek bail immediately** after the filing of the charge sheet. Thus the accused gets the benefit of completing an investigation in a shorter time.

The POCSO Act provides that the court **shall presume** that the accused has committed the offence. However, no such presumption is taken up by the court during trial.

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70. [Sexual harassment allegations made by women wrestlers: Wrestle with this](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Sexual harassment allegations made by women wrestlers: Wrestle with this**” published in **The Indian Express** on **20th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance– Issues related to sports

News– The article explains the issues of **sexual exploitation of sports women** by people holding important positions in sports administration.

Recently, some sportswomen levelled charges of sexual harassment against President of Wrestling Federation of India.

What are issues faced in ensuring justice for sports women who face sexual exploitation from people in sports administration?

Indian sport is characterised by a dangerous **combination of political nexus and male domination of positions of power**. The authorities are taking advantage of their **political might**.

It is not easy to fight against the powerful political appointees and those who operate in their **patronage**. Most women athletes who raise their voice are forced to give up their careers.

The women sportsperson who have put their lives often does not have **any second professional option** as back-up and have little familial support. It makes them more **vulnerable to exploitation** at the hands of corrupt officials.

Redressal and grievance provisions for taking up the complaints of sports women have been **absolutely ineffective**. They have instilled **zero confidence** in women to come out and report their abuse.

There is **victim blaming and shaming** by the accused. Their **political machinery combined with the social stigma** associated with cases of sexual abuse make it extremely difficult for a lone victim to fight entire apparatus.

One important case is tennis player **Ruchika Girhotra** from 1990 who dared to raise her voice against the then president of tennis federation and IG Haryana Police.

What is the way forward to ensure justice for sportswomen who face sexual exploitation?

There is an immediate need to formulate an **effective legal process** that needs to be followed in cases of harassment of women sportspersons.

Committees against sexual harassment must be constituted at all sports’ departments, federations and government sports bodies right till the highest levels.

If **due processes** are not followed, the authorities must be **held accountable**.

It is incumbent on people of this country to show solidarity towards sports women in their tough fight

71. [The inevitable geopolitical lens in Sri Lanka](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The inevitable geopolitical lens in Sri Lanka**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- India and neighbourhood- Relations

Relevance– Trade and economic relationship with Sri Lanka

News– The article explains the status of Sri Lankan relationship with India and China. It also explains the official debt owned by Sri Lanka.

What is the status of Sri Lankan relationship with India and China?

China is a close partner of Sri Lanka and its **largest bilateral creditor**. At The end of 2021, the island owed about \$7.4 billion or 19.6% of its outstanding public debt to China. It is called the “**Chinese debt trap**”.

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India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbour with **shared history and geography**. It is Sri Lanka's **third largest bilateral lender** after Japan and a **key development partner**.

Last year, India extended nearly \$4 billion to Sri Lanka to help mitigate its crisis. Prior to 2022, Sri Lanka owed just under a billion dollars to India.

What is the reality of official debt owned by Sri Lanka?

The **"Chinese debt trap"** narrative is irresistible. It owes a huge sum to a very powerful partner. Sri Lanka debt trap is **not necessarily Chinese**.

The largest chunk of Sri Lanka's foreign debt is **owed to Western, private creditors holding International Sovereign Bonds**.

What is the way forward for the narrative on official debt owned by Sri Lanka?

There is a need for **public scrutiny** of official debt. It is required to **access information** fiercely guarded by the establishment.

People should know about the rates of lending, period of the loan, the expenditure of borrowed money, and consequences of not repaying the debt.

Projects should not merely be seen as Indian, or Chinese assisted. They need to be evaluated on the basis of their **development potential for people**.

72. [Maldives polls, India's concerns](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **"Maldives polls, India's concerns"** published in **The Indian Express** on **20th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: India-Maldives relations

News: India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Maldives earlier this week and met country's President Ibrahim Solih. The article discusses the current development in India and Maldives bilateral relations.

What are the developments made between the two nations?

1. Jaishankar and Maldives President **participated in the groundbreaking ceremony of an international airport** being developed by India at Hanimadhoo in Haaa Dahaalu atoll.

They also **signed three MoUs**, including on a proposed collaboration between Cochin University and the Maldives National University, and a \$100 million grant for "high impact community development" projects.

Jaishankar handed over **two sea ambulances to the Maldives** Defence Ministry. He also **distributed books at a pre-school** in Manadhoo.

Jaishankar along with his counterpart inaugurated an **India-funded community centre in the Foakaidhoo island**.

Discussions were also made with a focus on development cooperation, capacity building and people-to-people ties.

Moreover, **India's Neighbourhood First and SAGAR policies** have helped in the improvement of ties between the two nations. **Maldives is also a part of the India-driven Colombo Security Conclave**.

Further, Maldives foreign policy focuses on India First but it also focuses on improving ties with China which might be of concern for India.

What is the significance of international airport being developed by India at Hanimadhoo in Haaa Dahaalu atoll?

The development of the airport will be **executed by the Indian company JMC Projects Ltd**. It has been financed by a line of credit to the Maldives from **India's Exim Bank**.

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The airport is expected to **help bring in more tourists to the northern areas** of the Maldives as tourism is an important economic activity of Maldives.

This is the **second biggest infra project that India has begun** in recent months **after the Greater Male Connectivity project**, that aims to link the Maldives capital to three neighbouring highlands with a bridge and causeway over the sea.

These two projects are important for India to check China's presence in the nation as it has developed Male-Hulumale-Hulhule bridge and the Hulumale airport.

[73. ASER 2022 findings – ASER report has significant pointers on reversing post-pandemic educational losses](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“Flip the page to the chapter on middle schoolchildren” published in **The Hindu** on **20th January 2023**.

“ASER report has significant pointers on reversing post-pandemic educational losses” published in the **Indian Express** on **20th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the recent ASER findings in 2022.

News: Recently, the Annual Status of Education Report(ASER) 2022 was released by Pratham, a non-governmental organization. This is the first nationwide ASER survey in four years.

What are the key findings of ASER 2022 findings?

Read here: [ASER 2022: ASER Report flags widening learning gaps](#)

Note: The assessment is done one on one with each sampled child in the household. The child is marked at the highest level that she/he can comfortably reach. The same tasks are used for all children aged 5 years to 16 years.

What are the advantages of the Indian education system as per ASER 2022 findings?

In 2018, the all-India rural enrolment figure for the age group 6-14 years was 97.2%. In ASER 2022 data, this is now 98.4%. This means that **a)** More students can benefit from schooling for longer, sustained periods, **b)** The proportion of out-of-school girls has fallen to 2%, **c)** Completion of the entire cycle of eight years of schooling for 25 million students is a significant achievement, and **d)** Most schools — even in rural areas — “attempted to keep learning going with digital resources.

A comparative analysis of learning outcomes during the pandemic and post-pandemic years in West Bengal, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh highlights **a)** States have reversed their learning losses significantly in 2022,

What are the key concerns associated with the Indian education system as per ASER 2022 findings?

-More and more students going through middle school and attending secondary schools. So, there is **increased competition for post-secondary opportunities**.

-Acute **examination stress, grade inflation** in school-leaving examinations, difficulties in gaining admission into college, and **lack of appropriate jobs** for many school-leavers are all consequences of high enrolment and completion rates.

-**Low levels of reading and arithmetic skills among children:** ASER evidence suggests that basic learning levels of middle school children have remained low and stagnant for over a decade. The “value” added each year of middle school is small.

Unless children have strong foundational skills, they cannot acquire higher level skills or develop advanced content knowledge.

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What are the reasons highlighted by ASER 2022 for the dismal performance of the Indian education system?

Firstly, an “**overambitious**” curriculum and the **linear age-grade organisational structure** of Indian schools result in a vast majority of children getting “left behind” early in their school career.

Secondly, **low motivation to learn** and a **lack of self-confidence** are also a reason for dismal performance.

Thirdly, our school system is driven by preparations for Board examinations. **Academic content transacted** in schools does not mean that the students are ready for college. Further, a **college degree is neither relevant nor possible** for most students who finish secondary school.

What should be done to improve the Indian education system?

It is time to **rethink and rework children’s educational plans** once they grow past the foundational stage of schooling to fulfil the National Education Policy targets and NIPUN Bharat missions.

Middle school children urgently **need support for** learning recovery and “**catch up**”.

Empowering teachers and reaching out to students in their homes can significantly improve learning outcomes.

Overall, India needs to frame a system that synergises the roles of the home and classroom is the key to improving the Indian educational system.

74. [A detached approach is crucial for a uniform civil code](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A detached approach is crucial for a uniform civil code**” published in the **Livemint** on **20th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

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](#)

A UCC envisions an exhaustive and comprehensive statute of personal laws that will govern Indian society uniformly on issues relating to marriage, maintenance, succession, guardianship, adoption and other related matters. It would encourage joint proprietorship over all benefits obtained by spouses and aim to protect vulnerable sections of society as envisaged by Ambedkar.

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

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

What is the view of the constituent Assembly on UCC?

The Constituent Assembly was also divided over a UCC.

Those who believed that the state and religion were of no concern to each other called for the inclusion of a UCC under fundamental rights. They argued that different personal laws drawn from religious belief would split the state into watertight compartments and result in multiplicity of laws.

Others argued that the individual right to choice of a personal code should be a fundamental one.

Finally, the **fundamental rights sub-committee categorized a UCC as a directive principle**. They followed Ambedkar’s equal-respect idea of secularism, granting religious liberty to all communities.

What are the benefits of implementing UCC?

If implemented well, the UCC would promise **a)** communal peace, **b)** national integration, **c)** equal treatment of and rights for women in inheritance and divorce, **d)** consistent marriage and divorce norms, among other benefits.

Overall, the UCC will address all loopholes arising out of variegated personal laws by simplifying the code and offering a coherent legal system.

What should be done to implement UCC?

A one-size-fits-all approach may have worked for countries like Italy, the US and UK, but such policies might not work well in a country that is as diverse in its practices as India.

So, to implement it, India needs clear drafting of UCC's details. This might help to scrutinize the issue from a detached perspective and address it in a phased manner.

75. [There is hardly any autonomy at the panchayat level](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**There is hardly any autonomy at the panchayat level**” published in **The Hindu** on **21th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein

Relevance– Issues related to implementation of 73rd and 74th amendment act

News– The article explains the issue of state government control over functioning of panchayats. Recently, an up-sarpanch in Telangana's committed suicide due to **indebtedness**. He had taken out a loan to undertake development works in the village and was unable to pay after the State government's inordinate delay in releasing bill payments.

How State governments exercise considerable discretionary authority and influence over panchayats?

Issue of funding– Gram panchayats remain fiscally dependent on grants from the State and the Centre for everyday activities. Broadly, panchayats have **three main sources of funds** — their own sources of revenue, grants in aid, and discretionary or scheme-based funds.

Their **own sources of revenue** constitute a tiny proportion of overall panchayat funds. In Telangana, less than a quarter of a panchayat's revenue comes from its own sources of revenue. Further, **access to discretionary grants** for panchayats remains dependent on **political and bureaucratic connections**.

Even when higher levels of government allocate funds to local governments, sarpanchs need help in accessing them. An **inordinate delay in transferring approved funds** to panchayat accounts stalls local development.

There are also severe constraints on panchayats for using the funds allocated to them. State governments often **impose spending limits** on various expenditures through panchayat funds. In almost all States, there is a **system of double authorisation** for spending panchayat funds. Apart from sarpanchs, disbursal of payments requires **bureaucratic concurrence**.

Interference of higher authorities– State governments also bind local governments' through the local bureaucracy. Approval for public works projects often requires **technical approval** from the engineering department and **administrative approval** from local officials of the rural development department.

Higher-level politicians and bureaucrats often intervene in selecting beneficiaries for government programmes and limiting the power of sarpanches further.

Sarpanchs need to have **good relationships** with politicians and local bureaucrats if they want access to **discretionary resources, timely disbursement of funds**.

The ability of sarpanches to **exercise administrative control** over local employees is also limited. In many States, the recruitment of local functionaries is conducted at the district or

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block level. Often the sarpanch does not even have the **power to dismiss** these local-level employees.

Dismissal process– Sarpanchs can be dismissed while in office. Gram Panchayat Acts in many States have **empowered district-level bureaucrats**, mostly district Collectors, to act against sarpanchs for official misconduct.

Across the country, there are **regular instances** of bureaucrats deciding to dismiss sarpanchs from office. In Telangana, more than 100 sarpanchs have been dismissed from office in recent years.

76. Appointments, Disappointments – on SC collegium

Source: The post is based on an article “**Appointments, Disappointments**” published in **The Times of India** and “**SC Collegium’s move to go public on government’s objections to its nominees is welcome but selective**” published in **The Indian Express** on **21st January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: concerns with the appointment of judges

News: The article discusses the lacunae in the appointment of judges and measures needed to resolve it.

What are the different problems with the appointment of judges in the Courts?

Amongst other criteria, judges of the SC or HC are also appointed **on the basis of region, religion, caste and gender**.

Further, it has also been seen that the chances of those people for appointment increases who **have better political connections or their relatives are already judges**. At times, the **religion of the person is also misused** for the appointment.

This concern was also highlighted in the **80th report in 1979 by the Law Commission**. The report said wrong appointments of judges have affected the image of courts. They have also undermined the confidence of the people in the courts.

The report further said that a person appointed not on merit but because of favouritism or other considerations can hardly have respect for the bar and can hardly give proper judgements.

The Law Commission in its 230th Report (2009) said for the HCs that it appears that this high office is patronised.

A person, whose near relation or well-wisher is or had been a judge in the higher courts or is a senior advocate or is a political high-up, stands a better chance of elevation.

What are other concerns with the appointment of judges?

The appointment of judges is done through **the Collegium system**. This system is **not transparent** and there are hardly any reasons provided behind the selection or rejection of the names by the Collegium.

However, the Collegium of the SC has recently taken a transparent decision though providing reasons to reiterate its recommendation on the appointment of five advocates as high court judges, and has gone public for both its reiteration and the government’s objection.

What can be the source of action?

SC should not only **be transparent** for a few names but it must make public its recommendations and its reasoned response to government objections on all names.

It must also **provide reasons** for why it did not reiterate some of the names the government rejected, and why it changed its mind on some of the names that it rejected which the government sent back on for its reconsideration.

Therefore, bringing transparency in the appointment, selection, and rejection of the judges is needed for the democratic institution like the courts to work efficiently.

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77. [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**.

78. 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.

[79. 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](#)

[80. 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.

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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](#)

81. [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**.

82. 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**.

83. 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.

[84. 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**.

85. [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](#)

86. [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.

87. [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.

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88. [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.

89. [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.

[90. 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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91. [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.

92. [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.

93. [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.

94. [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](#)

95. [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.

96. [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.

97. 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.

98. 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**.

99. [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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of January 2023

General

Studies

Paper – 3

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General Studies - 3

1. [The danger of deepfakes](#)

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

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: concerns associated with deepfake technology.

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

What are deepfakes?

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

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

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

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

What are the problems with deepfakes?

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

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

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

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

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

What can be the course of action?

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 3 – Food Security

Relevance: benefits and challenges associated millets

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

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What are the benefits of millets?

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

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

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

What are the challenges with millets?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

Relevance– Issues related to energy markets

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward for India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About gas-based economy in India.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance- Issues related to banking and monetary policy

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

What are the legal provisions for demonetisation initiated by RBI?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Environment**

Relevance: concerns associated with adoption of clean energy.

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

What is needed towards adoption of clean energy?

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

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

What are the reasons behind delay in storage technology?

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

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

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

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

What are other concerns with the adoption of green hydrogen?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance– Issues related to fiscal policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is wealth tax and its prevalence in India?

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

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

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

What is the way forward?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About the success of Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

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

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

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

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

What are the concerns associated with the UPI?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

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

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

What are the excerpts of the PM’s speech?

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

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

What is the Indian Science Congress?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What can be done to bring reforms in the ISC?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should be the approach towards this issue?

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 3 – Employment.

Relevance: About job-displacing technology.

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

How has technological progress impacted the job market worldwide?

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

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

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

How has India's job market impacted technological progress?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What can be done to reverse job-displacing technologies?

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About the status of the Indian economy.

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

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

Data on buying

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

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

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

Data on borrowing

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

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

Data on selling

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

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

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

Other stress indicators of the economy

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

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

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

What are the opportunities for reviving the Indian economy?

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

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

How India can revive the Indian economy?

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance– Issues related to the global economy and trade.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About Nano-fertilisers.

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

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

What are the benefits of nano-fertilisers?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About regulation of Online Games.

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

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

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What is the need for regulating Online Games?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issues related to climate change

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

India's per capita emissions are relatively low at 1.8 tons of CO₂e per person, but we are still the world's third-largest single emitter. India has pledged for net zero by 2070.

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

This will not be easy. On its current trajectory, India's emissions are set to grow from 2.9 GtCO₂e a year to 11.8 GtCO₂e in 2070.

It will come with a huge cost. According to a recent **McKinsey report**, **effective decarbonisation**, down to 1.9 GtCO₂e by 2070, would require India to spend a total of \$7.2 trillion on **green initiatives** by 2050. **Deeper decarbonisation** that would reduce emissions to just 0.4 GtCO₂e by 2050 would require \$12 trillion in total green investments by 2050.

Why is the decarbonisation path beneficial for the Indian economy?

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward to net zero in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Security**

Relevance: challenges with the Indian military

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

What are the challenges with Indian and its military?

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

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

What organisational changes have been brought in Indian military?

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

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

Further, to increase the defence budget government has reduced the pension budget and has come up with Agnipath Yojana.

What can be done to improve the Indian military?

First, India remains the only major military power that has not laid out its strategic objectives in a published NSS. Therefore, it should focus on bringing a **National Security Strategy (NSS)**. This would help in building national defence strategy with clear military ambitions.

Second, there is a need for creation of a **higher defence organisation** with representatives from all the ministries in order to have a national political consensus to the military.

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18. [Towards making India an uplinking hub](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Towards making India an uplinking hub**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

Relevance– Issues related to communication sector

News– The article explains the major developments in the television industry since its inception. It also explains the recent policy developments in this industry and their rationale behind these policy decisions

What are recent developments in the television industry?

In 2021, the **Cable Television Network Rules, 1994**, were amended to include a statutory mechanism for grievance redressal of viewers relating to content broadcast by television channels.

In 2022, the Union Cabinet approved the **policy guidelines for the uplinking and downlinking** of television channels from India.

Uplink refers to the link from a ground station up to a satellite. A downlink is the link from a satellite down to one or more ground stations or receivers.

What were the major developments in the television industry up to the 1990s?

Television started in India in September 1959. For almost three decades, broadcasting was solely under the control of the state.

In the early 1990s, **cable television** arrived in India. The government was unprepared to check **transmission** and broadcast through **foreign satellites**. Cable television networks grew at a very fast pace, and **foreign television networks** invaded our culture through their programmes.

In order to regulate the cable network industry and to make registration of cable operators mandatory, the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995** was brought in. In 2000, the first license to set up a **teleport** was given. It is an earth station facility from where TV signals can be uplinked to a geostationary satellite.

After the 1990s, some people in India joined hands with some Non-Resident Indians in Hong Kong to launch the country's **first private television channel** called Zee TV, in October 1992.

In the next few years, Business India Television; Asia Television Network, and Jain TV also began operating. All these channels flew out tapes every day to Hong Kong, Singapore or Moscow for uplinking. Broadcasting was obviously an expensive and cumbersome affair.

What were the developments in the television industry after the 2000s?

The Indian broadcasters were allowed to uplink from Indian soil. The facility was made available through Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited.

Government of India, notified the ‘**Guidelines for Uplinking from India**’ in July 2000 and private broadcasters got permission to set up their **own earth stations and to uplink**. The **first license** was given to TV Today Network Limited in November 2000. In 2001, five broadcasters set up their earth stations with the **facility to uplink**.

The MIB issued uplinking and **downlinking policy guidelines in 2011** for private satellite TV channels and teleports.

What is the rationale behind the recent policy guidelines for uplinking and downlinking of television channels?

The decision has been taken in view of the challenges from the **evolving broadcasting technology, changes in market scenarios and other operational developments** in the broadcasting sector.

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The guidelines aim to create a **conducive environment** in line with the principle of **ease of doing business on a sound regulatory framework**. But more importantly, these are aimed at making India a **teleport hub** for other countries.

19. [Green hydrogen mission: A green promise](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“A green promise – Small enterprises can be the mainstay of the green economy” published in **The Hindu** on **6th January 2023**.

“Green hydrogen has got a spark that it deserves” published in the **Livemint** on **6th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Relevance: About green hydrogen mission.

News: The Union Cabinet has recently approved the National Green Hydrogen Mission. About the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

Read here: [Cabinet approves National Green Hydrogen Mission](#)

By 2030, the mission aims to have at least 5 million metric tonnes of annual green hydrogen production, electrolyser capacity of 60-100 gigawatts and a 125-gigawatt renewable energy capacity for green hydrogen and its associated transmission network.

What is green hydrogen?

Read more: [Green Hydrogen: Potential, Issues and Solutions – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the need for a green hydrogen mission?

a) Green hydrogen holds the **promise of global leadership** as the industry is still nascent worldwide, **b)** The EU, US and others have allocated big budgets for cleanly made hydrogen that can fuel vehicles, furnaces and other fuel-guzzlers, and **c)** Hydrogen is an essential industrial fuel that has a range of uses from producing ammonia, making steel and cement, to powering fuel cells that can run buses and cars. But, the cheapest way to manufacture this is to rely on fossil fuel. With a dedicated green mission India can generate it without any concerns of global warming.

What are the potential uses of Green Hydrogen?

Read here: [Application of Green hydrogen](#)

a) Ideal way to decarbonize transport and other sectors like steel, **b)** Provide much-needed policy flexibility for the government. For instance, as technology widens India’s fuel choice set, the government will get more space to manage external trade balances.

What are the potential challenges in implementing the green hydrogen mission?

High cost: Right now, an estimated ₹300-400 is required to produce a kilogram of green hydrogen. This must be brought down to under ₹100 for Indian output to be globally competitive.

Issue of efficiency: To improve efficiency every link of the supply chain has to be kept secure, that includes cheaply made but dependable electrolysers. Domestic energy deficiency has been a constraint in India.

India’s potential to deliver: Despite policies, India has not managed to be a net exporter of solar cells, semiconductors or wind power components. This is because India’s underlying manufacturing base continues to be weak and unable to efficiently absorb and utilise global capital.

What should be done to achieve green hydrogen mission targets?

India should **move towards decarbonization**. This is because at present decarbonization is a big policy focus around the world. For that, the green hydrogen mission is a good step. But it should be accompanied by **a)** Extension of production-linked incentive schemes to the green

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hydrogen sector, **b)** Investment in Cutting-edge R&D technologies, and **c)** Strengthening small manufacturing and allied enterprises' infrastructure. This will create a strong manufacturing base as small enterprises will be the mainstay of any green economy.

20. [Jolt From Joshimath – Govts have finally woken up to a hill town being on the brink of an ecological disaster. But more needs to be done](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Jolt From Joshimath – Govts have finally woken up to a hill town being on the brink of an ecological disaster. But more needs to be done**” published in **The Times of India** on **6th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster and disaster management.

Relevance: About the construction work in the Himalayan region.

News: After protests in Uttarakhand's Joshimath over deepening cracks in houses, the district administration has halted road and power plant construction works in the vicinity, including the char dham road work.

About the construction work in the Himalayan region

The Garhwal division is among India's most vulnerable regions. From 1976 to 2022, multiple government committees issued warnings to stop heavy construction activities.

But the state and Centre did not halt the projects. As a result, the 2013 [Uttarakhand floods](#), and last year's [Chamoli disaster](#) were caused by a rock and ice avalanche that killed 200 people in Joshimath's vicinity and damaged two hydel projects.

Read more: [Reasons and Solutions for disaster management in Uttarakhand](#)

What should be done to protect hilly and coastal regions?

Change the development strategy: Before it is too late, the government should change the frequent cave-ins and landslides marring these projects.

Revisit the quality of environmental impact assessment(EIA): For instance, Manipur's government decided to “revisit” the Imphal-Jiribam rail link's EIA after a landslide.

Take eco-friendly measures: By halting construction activities the government may dampen economic growth and job creation, but it significantly reduces the dangers of a huge ecological disaster.

Adequate assessment of landslide risks and proper preliminary structural engineering works are required to stabilise subsequent constructions in hilly and coastal regions.

21. [Armed drones in Indian military: Can machines understand the rules of war?](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**Armed drones in Indian military: Can machines understand the rules of war?**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance- Issues with induction of modern technology for military use

News- The article explains the issues related to AI-enabled warfighting approaches. It also explains the increasing use of drones and underwater combat drones. It also explains issues related to underwater combat drones.

What shows the increasing emphasis on drones by Indian armed forces?

Indian Army is inducting **swarm drones** into its mechanized forces.

The Indian Navy has been on a mission to **expand surveillance** in India's near-seas. It has leased **MQ-9B Sea Guardian drones** from the US. It has also released an **unclassified version of its “unmanned roadmap”** for the induction of remote autonomous platforms, including **undersea vehicles**. A key driver for the enterprise is **underwater domain awareness**.

India navy is also planning to procure a fleet of armed “**Predator**” **drones** from the United States.

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Why is the Indian navy planning to induct underwater drone combat systems?

After the conflict in Ladakh in June 2020, there is a growing sense among Indian experts and military planners that **China's undersea presence** in the Indian Ocean is increasing.

There were recent reports of the sighting of Chinese drones in the waters off **Indonesian islands**. It suggests that the PLA Navy has been studying the **operating environment** of the Indian Ocean.

There has been a rise in the deployment of **Chinese research and survey vessels** in the waters around India's **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.

Indian decision-makers are acknowledging the **warfighting abilities** of underwater autonomous platforms powered by **artificial intelligence**. They are recognizing the likely impact of **disruptive technologies** on the **maritime domain**.

AI powered by deep learning, data analytics, and cloud computing will alter the **maritime battlefield**.

What are issues with AI-enabled warfighting systems?

AI technology is more **complicated** than many imagine. There is an **ethical paradox** connected with artificially intelligent combat systems. AI compromises the **control, safety, and accountability** of weapon systems.

It also enhances the risk of **shared liability** between networked systems. It happens particularly when weapon algorithms are sourced from abroad, and the satellite and link systems are not under the control of the user.

AI is characterized by a predisposition to certain kinds of data. Biases in the **collection of data, data analysis**, and the selection of **probabilistic outcomes** impact **rational decision-making**. It is undermining confidence in **automated combat solutions**. AI-automated weapon systems are inconsistent with the **laws of war**.

Using nascent technologies without **comprehensive testing** puts both military personnel and civilians at risk. A system of targeting human beings based on **probabilistic assessments** by computers, is problematic because the computer does not have access to all relevant data to make an **informed decision**. It is difficult to **decide accountability** in case of erroneous use of force, as blame can't be pinned on a machine.

There is no easy way of incorporating **AI-enabled warfighting approaches into doctrine**. Many technologies are in a nascent stage of development, and there is little clarity about how effective AI could be in combat.

Military doctrine is premised on a **traditional understanding of conflict**. There are rules and codes and **ethical standards** for warfare. **"Proportionality"** in force deployment is critical.

What are issues faced by the Indian navy for the use of AI powered technology and underwater combat systems?

For the Indian Navy, **capacity limitation** restricts the development of AI. A large gap exists in the development of **critical technologies** such as system engineering, airborne and underwater sensors, and weapon systems.

The **legal issues** related to underwater combat drones are complex. It is not yet clear if unmanned maritime systems enjoy the **status of "ships" under the UN convention of the laws of the sea**.

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22. [UGC's draft regulations-2023: Opening the campus door](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**UGC's draft regulations-2023: Opening the campus door**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th January 2023**.

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

Relevance– Higher education

News– The article explain the new draft guidelines issued by central government to allow foreign universities in India

What are important provisions contained in draft guidelines?

The UGC draft regulations-2023 allow **top 500 foreign universities** to establish their branch campuses in India. The ranking will be decided by the UGC from time to time.

It set another criterion for a branch campus to be opened up in India that the applicant should be a **reputed institution** in its home jurisdiction.

The draft regulations-2023 allow foreign higher educational institutions to decide a fee structure that is “**transparent and reasonable**”.

Foreign higher educational institutions now have the **freedom** to decide qualifications, salary structure, and other conditions of service for appointing faculty and staff.

The Foreign Higher Educational Institutions should arrange for **adequate physical infrastructure**.

All Indian students with foreign degrees are required to get an **equivalence certificate** from the Association of Indian Universities. The draft regulations-2023 waive off **equivalence requirement** for the degrees granted by the foreign branch campuses in India.

Foreign Higher Educational Institutions shall not offer any such programme of study which jeopardises the **national interest of India** or the standards of higher education in India.

The operation of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions shall not be contrary to the **sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency, or morality**.

It allows for smooth repatriation of profits earned by the foreign branch campuses under the rules and **FEMA, 1999**.

What are issues with the draft guidelines?

It is not clear how the UGC would determine the reputation of such foreign universities that do not appear in any **world rankings** but are considered reputed in their home country.

The freedom to decide fee structure will make the courses offered by foreign universities **expensive and not accessible** to many students. It will not be in tune with the **NEP-2020 commitment** to cater to the needs of socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

The provision related to arrangement of **physical infrastructure** would be problematic for foreign higher education institutions. They will be reluctant to go for major **infrastructural investment**.

it would be difficult to ensure that the degrees offered by the foreign branch campuses would be accepted by the employers in the home countries of the campuses.

The provisions related to **sovereignty, security and national interest** would be problematic for Humanities and Social Sciences where **multiple interpretations** are popular. The foreign faculty members may find it difficult to **balance state policies, sensibilities and their intellectual standpoint**.

A major bone of contention between foreign branch campuses and the Indian government had been the issue of **repatriation of profit**. Education in India is not a profitable enterprise. It is a **public good**.

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23. Who Tunnels Through A Sinking Town?

Source: The post is based on the article “Who Tunnels Through A Sinking Town?” published in **The Times of India** on **7th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster and disaster management.

Relevance: About the construction work in the Himalayan region.

News: The Himalayan town Joshimath is under tremendous stress, and a portion of it may sink. About Joshimath

Joshimath, or Jyotirmath, is a temple town and a municipality in Uttarakhand’s Chamoli district. The math or monastery is one of the four cardinal institutions founded by **Adi Shankaracharya** in the four corners of India. The cantonment at Joshimath is one of the closest to the China border.

Thus, the town has both religious and strategic significance.

Read more: [Jolt From Joshimath – Govts have finally woken up to a hill town being on the brink of an ecological disaster. But more needs to be done](#)

What has led to this disaster in Joshimath?

–**Chamoli disaster:** The glacial avalanche known as the Chamoli disaster led to flash floods in the Rishiganga and Dhaulganga rivers in February 2021. The two rivers are tributaries of the Ganga.

The disaster killed around 200 people, including workers trapped in the **Tapovan Vishnugad hydropower plant**’s tunnel on the Dhaulganga river.

–According to Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority, heavy downpour, cloudburst, rock fall, debris flow, avalanche, flood/ flash floods occurred in many locations of the state. The research explains that these disasters mostly relate to **a)** meteorological regime changes, **b)** unusual rainfall patterns, and **c)** indiscriminate human actions in high-risk areas.

–**Findings of MC Mishra committee:** In 1964, the government had appointed MC Mishra committee to find out why Joshimath was sinking. The committee found that **a)** Joshimath is situated in an old landslide zone, **b)** Joshimath could sink if rampant development is unchecked. The committee recommended that substantial construction should be prohibited in the vicinity of Joshimath.

–Despite the region’s geological and environmental sensitivity, numerous hydroelectric projects including the Vishnugad hydel project have been approved in areas such as Joshimath and Tapovan.

–In 2010, two private researchers found that the tunnelling process in projects punctures the water-bearing strata and causes harm in water gushing out and flooding the area.

What are the threats posed by climate change on Himalayan ecosystem?

The Himalayan mountains are one of the youngest mountains of the world and therefore they are fragile and unstable. Small changes in the weather and climate pattern affect the mountain system strongly.

IPCC reports have made the following observations **a)** Due to global warming, the region has been experiencing extreme weather events as recorded in 2021-22. The number of extreme rainfall events that have hit Uttarakhand was unprecedented.

A **transformative change** in both thinking and the patterns of growth is necessary.

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24. [Her story Of War – Peace has a better chance with women in charge](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Her story Of War – Peace has a better chance with women in charge” published in **The Times of India** on **7th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

Relevance: About inclusion of women in the peace process.

News: India has sent an all-women platoon of peacekeepers to Abyei, Sudan. This is the second such deployment since the deployment of female peacekeeping police unit to Liberia in 2007.

Note: As of 2020, out of 95,000 UN peacekeepers, women made up only 4.8% of military contingents and 10.9% of police units.

What are the impacts created by the female peacekeeping police unit in Liberia?

a) The deployment prompted for **recruiting of more women in the Liberian police**, **b)** After the Indian women peacekeeping force left, Liberian women made up 17% of the country’s security sector, up from 6% before their arrival.

Read more: [The silent revolution of Nari Shakti](#)

Why inclusion of women in the peace process is essential?

Various research have found that **1)** When women make decisions, the risks of war and conflict reduce, **2)** Civil society groups including women’s organisations make a peace agreement about 64% less likely to fail, **3)** When women participate in peace processes, the agreement is 35% more likely to last at least 15 years, **4)** Women face the worst brunt of war, in terms of sexual violence and abuse as well as displacement. The inclusion of women in the peace process will encourage women to reclaim public life without fear.

Read more: [What is Imphal’s Ima market, which minister Jaishankar called ‘a great example of Nari Shakti’](#)

In short, Women will be safer if there are many more women in all ranks in various government branches, including the police.

25. [Utkarsh 2.0.: RBI’s updated strategy requires another update](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “RBI’s updated strategy requires another update” published in the **Livemint** on **9th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Utkarsh 2.0. and its concerns.

News: Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched Utkarsh 2.0.

What is Utkarsh 2.0.?

Read here: [RBI launches Utkarsh 2.0 for the period 2023-2025](#)

What is the need for Utkarsh 2.0.?

A formal medium-term strategy document like Utkarsh 2.0. is essential for highly complicated tasks such as,

-Financial systems in almost all economies have become exceedingly elaborate, entangled and complicated. This requires central banks to detect nascent signs of financial instability which could arise anywhere in the system and turn contagious.

-In a globalized world, central banks require to watch over foreign exchange flows and manage currency-rate volatility. They also balance price stability and growth.

What are the challenges present in Utkarsh 2.0.?

The document **a)** Missed laying down specific challenges and a detailed plan on how RBI proposes to engage with them, **b)** The Core Purpose outlined in Utkarsh 2.0 is a reworked version of the Reserve Bank of India Act’s preamble. Which itself was amended and changed in 2016 as a

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precursor to RBI's formal adoption of a flexible inflation-targeting regime, **c)** Many specific strategy points mentioned are also core to what a central bank is expected to discharge anyway. For example, The document mentioned works such as "Create a resilient financial intermediation ecosystem; refining the regulatory and supervisory framework". These are desirable end-result, than a strategy, and **d)** Does not mention about climate finance or green central banking. What should be done to improve Utkarsh 2.0.?

RBI must stay vigil to a wider range of scenarios than its strategy document. Some transparency and a feedback loop with the public will help RBI to arm itself better against future uncertainties.

26. [Driving To Despair – Poor maintenance, poor policing, poor traffic rules enforcement, too much wrong with India's roads](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Driving To Despair – Poor maintenance, poor policing, poor traffic rules enforcement, too much wrong with India's roads**" published in **The Times of India** on **9th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About preventing accidents on Indian roads.

News: Recent road accidents in Delhi, Uttarakhand and Tamil Nadu highlight the multiple dimensions of risks and accidents on Indian roads.

A third of the 4. 1 lakh documented road accidents in 2021 resulted in 1. 5 lakh deaths. Another third of the accidents resulted in grievous injuries.

What should be done to reduce accidents on Indian roads?

Ensure proper lighting: Women motorists and pedestrians will feel much safer on better-lit roads. Further, these roads enable improved road visibility.

Added responsibility: Agencies like NHAI and state public works departments, should not only construct and maintain major roads but also has to be entrusted with maintaining poor road conditions like potholes, inadequate signages and unscientific road construction.

Encourage Samaritan initiatives: The government should incentivise public participation in taking victims to hospitals promptly and reimbursing hospitals for emergency trauma care.

Implementing Electronic monitoring: The Motor Vehicles Act as amended in 2019 empowered state governments to conduct electronic monitoring of roads through speed cameras, CCTV cameras, speed guns, body wearable cameras etc. Investments in such tech upgrades should happen faster.

From policing to courts to transport departments to public works to healthcare, **a 'whole of government' approach** can make citizens safer. Road safety enforcement should be the next generation of governance reforms that India must target.

Read more: [Road Safety in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

27. [From RIL to L&T and Adani, corporate giants build on EPC rule change](#)

Source– The post is based on the article "**From RIL to L&T and Adani, corporate giants build on EPC rule change**" published in the **Business Standard** on **10th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Investment models

Relevance– Issues related to infrastructure development

News– The article explains the increasing preference of big infrastructure firms for EPC contracts.

Reliance Industries Ltd has decided that it would merge its engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) subsidiary Reliance Projects and Property Management.

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Many big infrastructure companies are pivoting towards government EPC contracts in a major way.

What is the reason for major infrastructure companies preferring EPC contracts?

This shift is primarily on account of several initiatives by government agencies in 2022. Most prominent of them are the National Highways Authority of India and the Railways. As a result, new entrants will operate on a **low-debt model to build greenfield assets**. The government will be responsible for selling the completed projects.

Government agencies are now handing out infrastructure contracts stating that bidders have to separate the **project financing plans from the post-construction phase**.

The **new paradigm** for infrastructure projects suits companies like L&T, RVNL, Adani or RIL. They have **large reserves** of cash for implementing the project.

An EPC project begins life with a 20% upfront payment contract offered by the bidding agency. Subsequent payments are linked to achieving project milestones that can be monitored by technology. Bidders need to hardly raise any debt.

What was the reason behind these decisions?

This change was mainly the result of NHAI's Rs 3.3-trillion debt burden.

The finance ministry discovered that most of the debt was due to **hybrid annuity model-based projects** for roads. Under this model, the bidders were offered to build the roads or bridges on a **tight budget and timeline**. They were allowed to **compensate** themselves from the returns when the projects became operational by charging tolls.

Many contractors were suspicious about collecting tolls or levying user charges, NHAI offered **assured returns of up to 40%** of the total project expenditure, payable usually over 10 years. The contractor had to arrange the rest.

Due to assured return, contractors **inflated projections**. Projects often came up late even as the government's bill mounted.

As a result of this, NHAI not only now asks the contractors to show **project construction cost**. It has also begun to use drones and satellites to monitor the pace of the progress.

In June 2022, the finance ministry said the past experience of the contractors has to be checked before issuing tenders.

28. Has human-animal conflict increased in Wayanad?

Source: The post is based on an article "**Has human-animal conflict increased in Wayanad?**" published in **The Hindu** on **10th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: reasons behind increasing human-animal conflict in Kerala and measures needed to mitigate.

News: There has been an increase in the human-animal conflict in Kerala. A daily worker was attacked by the elephant along with an attack on a bus.

What has led to an increase in the human-animal conflict in Kerala?

Human-animal conflict has become a serious wildlife management problem in Kerala in the last few years.

The reasons are – **a)** an increase in human population in wildlife habitats, **b)** habitat loss and fragmentation suffered by wild animals and **c)** change in cropping and land use patterns adopted by farmers.

Moreover, an analysis in various forest divisions of Kerala shows that human-wildlife conflict is a threat existing almost everywhere, but more frequently in the northern region and particularly in Wayanad.

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What can be done to prevent human-animal conflict?

The only solution is **mitigation of conflict**. Both government and society should work together as a single entity to prevent human-animal conflict.

Further, **forest conservation must be made more effective**, through participatory programmes involving the people.

29. [A mountain reeling under human aggression](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“A mountain reeling under human aggression” published in **The Hindu** on **10th January 2023**.

“Broken-Back Mountains: Joshimath, Darjeeling, Sikkim” published in **The Times of India** on **10th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster and disaster management.

Relevance: About protecting Hilly areas.

News: The Himalayan town Joshimath is under tremendous stress, and a portion of it may sink. About Joshimath

Read here: [Who Tunnels Through A Sinking Town?](#)

Joshimath, or Jyotirmath, is a temple town and a municipality in Uttarakhand’s Chamoli district. What are the challenges faced by Hilly areas?

Increase in rail and road network: The construction of highways and railway tracks has now become a prime cause for landslides and its occurrences have doubled over the years.

Increase in construction activities: For instance, in the next decade, the Government proposes to build 66 tunnels in the Uttarakhand Himalaya and 18 tunnels are already in operation.

Growth of the tourism sector: For instance, in Joshimath, in 2022, close to 5 crore tourists, 4 crore kanwar yatris and 45 lakh Char Dham pilgrims went to Uttarakhand. That’s about 10 crore.

Increased waste generation: For instance, the solid waste generation at Kedarnath was around 10,000 kg daily.

Depleting groundwater: Descending water levels have been observed in the hilly areas of tunnel construction. Further, erratic rainfall and ecological degradation associated with land use change are impacting mountain aquifer systems. For instance, the severity of the drinking water crisis in Darjeeling.

Low investment opportunity: People in tourist areas tend to invest in taxis and hotels. This again compounds the issue of urbanisation.

Increase in fallow land: Further, most of the farmers have now abandoned their traditional practices and only less than 20% of the agricultural land in the Himalayan districts of Uttarakhand is now being farmed and the rest has become fallow land.

Read more: [Jolt From Joshimath – Govts have finally woken up to a hill town being on the brink of an ecological disaster. But more needs to be done](#)

What should be done to protect hilly areas?

The steep gradients of the Uttarakhand Himalayas make it dynamically heterogeneous, in terms of climatic variables, and biodiversity. To protect the hilly areas the government should do the following,

-Like cities, hills also need investments and infrastructure. But that should not damage the ecological balance. The development strategy should be based on the region’s natural resources such as forests, water, biodiversity and ecotourism.

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-A **scientific study of hill towns** is needed to clearly define the carrying capacity of each hilly town.

-**Proper planning:** Sikkim railway project and Sevoke-Rangpo line are facing challenges due to improper planning.

-The Himalayan terrain demands **sustainable tourism**, not mass tourism.

-National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) report on the Chamoli disaster mentions that in the long term, it will be necessary to focus on **finding alternative sources of energy**.

In short, an appropriate strategy for human well-being should use traditional knowledge, agricultural practices, construction practices and local cultural aspects.

30. Ozone hole, filling up now: What this means for climate action

Source: The post is based on an article “**Ozone hole, filling up now: What this means for climate action**” published in **The Indian Express** on 11th January 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Climate Change

Relevance: recovery of ozone

News: An UN-based report suggests that the ozone hole of the world is expected to be completely repaired by 2066.

How did the recovery of the ozone hole happen?

It happened due to the successful elimination of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODSs), through the implementation of the **Montreal Protocol of 1989**.

As per the report, 99 percent of the substances banned by the Montreal Protocol have been eliminated from use resulting in a recovery of the ozone layer.

What is ozone and what are the reasons behind its depletion?

Ozone, a molecule having three Oxygen atoms (O₃) is found mainly in the **stratosphere**. It absorbs ultraviolet rays coming from the Sun. **Ozone hole refers** to the reduction in concentration of the ozone molecules.

In the 1980s, scientists began to notice a sharp drop in the concentration of ozone because of the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that were used extensively in the air conditioning, refrigeration, paints, and furniture industries.

What were the key findings of the UN based assessment?

As per the assessment, if current policies continued to be implemented, the ozone layer was expected to recover to 1980 values by 2066 over Antarctica, by 2045 over the Arctic, and by 2040 for the rest of the world.

Moreover, ozone-depleting substances are greenhouse gases which are more dangerous than carbon dioxide.

Therefore, the effective implementation of Montreal Protocol and elimination of ODSs would ensure the avoidance of 0.5 to 1 degree Celsius of warming by 2050.

Hence, with these views the Montreal Protocol was amended in 2016 to extend its mandate over hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) that have replaced the CFCs in industrial use.

What are HFCs and what are the amendment made in the Montreal Protocol?

HFCs do not cause much damage to the ozone layer but are very powerful greenhouse gases.

The **Kigali Amendment** to the Montreal Protocol seeks to **eliminate 80-90 percent of the HFCs currently in use by the year 2050**. This is expected to prevent another 0.3 to 0.5 degree Celsius of global warming by the end of the century.

Moreover, the success of Montreal Protocol is often cited as an example to curtail the other greenhouse gases. However, it might not be possible.

Why other greenhouse gases cannot be curtailed like ODSs?

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ODSs are not widely emitted and hence their limitation was successful but the emission of carbon dioxide is linked to the harnessing of energy. Almost every economic activity leads to carbon dioxide emissions.

For example, renewable energies have considerable carbon footprints because their manufacturing, transport, and operation involves the use of fossil fuels.

Further, unlike ODSs which were limited to the specific industry, greenhouse gas emissions are not limited to a few industries or economic sectors, but affects the entire economy.

31. Conservative budgeting – Fiscal space should be used carefully

Source: The post is based on an article “**Conservative budgeting – Fiscal space should be used carefully**” published in **Business Standard** on **11th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: ways to use additional fiscal resources

News: The Union government is confident of achieving the fiscal deficit target of 6.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the current fiscal year.

What has led the government in achieving the fiscal deficit target?

It is because of **conservative budgeting at multiple levels**. **For example**, the government budgeted for 9.6 percent growth in its tax revenue over the revised estimates for 2021-22.

However, the revised estimates calculated have grown by more than 23 per cent over the previous year.

Further, the government also assumed in nominal terms the Indian economy would grow by just about 11.1 per cent in the current fiscal year.

But, the first advance estimates for national income, released last week, show the economy is expected to grow by 15.4 percent this fiscal year.

This expansion in the economy gives the government additional space to spend while maintaining the required fiscal deficit as percentage of GDP leading to higher growth and tax collection.

However, underestimating growth and revenue collection can have an effect on overall expenditure efficiency but it is also a viable option.

How underestimating growth and revenue is beneficial?

Government has often struggled in the past to meet the fiscal-deficit target and ended up either **reducing capital expenditure or shifting revenue expenditure outside the Budget**.

However, adopting such measures in the present situation where both the debt-GDP ratio and fiscal deficit are at higher levels could create risks.

Further, it is also hard to anticipate both expenditure and revenue collection with precision at the time of presenting the Budget. Therefore, it is sensible for the government to adopt a conservative approach in Budget making.

Moreover, the government can also adopt a few measures when it has more fiscal space available in the year.

What measures can be adopted by the government when it has more fiscal space?

1. **a)** reduce the deficit and aim to reach the stated medium-term fiscal targets as early as possible, **b)** deploy additional resources in building physical and social infrastructure, **c)** spend more on education and health, **d)** spend additional resources on defence.

However, to utilize its additional fiscal resources, the government needs to have a clear and transparent medium-term fiscal consolidation roadmap, else it may end up using additional fiscal space without any longer-term benefit.

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32. [Get Wet, Get Well – Wetlands are nature’s shock absorbers. Their degradation in cities is real bad news for urban future](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Get Wet, Get Well – Wetlands are nature’s shock absorbers. Their degradation in cities is real bad news for urban future**” published in **The Times of India** on **11th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the role of the governor in the assembly.

News: Data from Wetlands International shows India has lost nearly two of five wetlands in the last 30 years, while 40% of them can’t support aquatic animals.

About the report on Wetlands

A total of 75 Indian wetlands with a surface area of over a million hectares are designated as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, which India ratified in 1982. But even the largest among them, the Sundarbans wetland, has lost around 25% of its mangroves due to erosion over the past three decades.

Vadodara lost 30% of its wetlands between 2005 and 2018, while Hyderabad has lost 55% of its semi-aquatic bodies due to inefficient waste management and unchecked urban development.

Encroachment and construction on Pallikaranai marsh in Chennai have made cities susceptible to flooding.

Read more: [40% of wetlands in India lost in last 30 yrs: Experts](#)

Why are wetlands significant?

Wetlands are vitally important for water storage and aquifer recharge and play the role of storm buffers and flood mitigators. Wetlands are also natural carbon sinks, making them crucial for combating climate change.

What are the reasons for losing wetlands?

The majority of the wetlands are lost due to unplanned infrastructure, pollution, over-exploitation and reclamation, and reduction in sediments due to upstream dams.

Ignoring urban wetlands: The government has notified the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 to serve as a regulatory framework for conservation efforts. But most of the assistance provided by the Centre to states for the conservation of wetlands is directed towards the notified Ramsar sites. Thus ignoring urban wetlands.

What should be done to protect wetlands?

-The government should create greater awareness about the benefits of wetland conservation.

-Urban planning should actively incorporate the preservation of wetlands like that of [Delhi Master Plan 2041](#).

33. [Inside the growing rift in ethanol economy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**INSIDE THE GROWING RIFT IN ETHANOL ECONOMY**” published in the **Livemint** on **11th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Energy.

Relevance: About the advantages and challenges in increasing ethanol-blending.

News: Today, the two-wheeler industry is looking at green and sustainable future mobility solutions spanning across electric, hybrid and alternate fuels. In such a scenario, ethanol-based products are an important option.

About the global success story of ethanol in Brazil

The biggest success story for ethanol in the world right now is Brazil. The country started blending ethanol with gasoline for transport in the mid-1970s.

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A vast majority of vehicles on the road in Brazil—about 86%—are powered by flex fuel technology that gives consumers the flexibility to use ethanol blends between 20% and 85%. The country has achieved an average blend of 48%, by far the highest in the world.

What are the advantages of increasing ethanol blending?

a) It is a replacement for imported crude and also helps to save foreign exchange, **b)** It is also cleaner with lower carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon tailpipe emissions, **c)** As ethanol is produced by fermenting sugarcane juice, it has also been lauded as the panacea for the surplus sugar issue.

Read more: [India has achieved the target of 10% ethanol blending ahead of schedule](#)

What are the challenges in increasing ethanol blending?

Despite various promotion measures, India has **only achieved a 10% blend** under its [Ethanol Blended Petrol\(EBP\) Programme](#) (10% of ethanol blended with 90% of petrol).

While India has ample sugarcane, the country **doesn't yet have enough fermentation capacity** required to make ethanol.

The rise in the blending percentage of ethanol in petrol would **make fuel distribution more complex**. For instance, To achieve E20 itself, require separate fuel pumps, tanks to store the fuels, and tankers to transport them. This sort of a supply chain will come at a significant cost for oil marketing firms.

In India, **older vehicles don't get phased out** automatically. So, India would need to keep the supply of E10 fuel besides operating additional pumps with higher blends.

According to Niti Aayog, the **price of flex-fuel four-wheelers could shoot up** in the range of ₹17,000-25,000. These are only preliminary estimates and the actual figures could be higher.

Ethanol has **27% less energy than petrol**. So, with higher levels of blending, the **fuel economy of the vehicle will diminish** by 4-8%. In short, the consumer will pay more for a less fuel-efficient vehicle.

Promoting ethanol will directly promote Sugarcane, which is a **water guzzling crop**.

Above all, **ethanol doesn't even solve the entire problem** as diesel is the majority transport fuel in the country (petrol accounts for 31% of transport fuel consumption).

Read more: [Why India's policy to produce ethanol-blended petrol is short-sighted](#)

What should be done for increasing ethanol blending?

Sugar-producing states of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra can initially adapt to the ethanol economy.

India requires a **major overhaul of not only vehicles** that would need flex fuel engines **but also the infrastructure** to support various fuel types.

The government is yet to **stipulate a roadmap for flex fuel technologies**. Ideally, the government should set targets for emissions and create a road map.

Directly incentivize consumers like Brazil: In Brazil, pure ethanol has been incentivized by lower taxation—it is approximately 30% cheaper than E27 fuel. Consumers were also directly incentivized through tax exemptions for buying flex fuel vehicles. India can follow a similar approach.

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34. [Delays, even with no jurisdiction](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Delays, even with no jurisdiction**” published in **Business Standard** on **12th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: problems with the IBC, 2016.

News: Judicial delays are acting as hindrance towards the insolvency process. It takes almost two years to admit an application and another two years to approve a resolution plan. This affects the purpose of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC).

What are the issues with the IBC?

The IBC provides for a regulator in the form of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (**IBBI**) which makes regulations relating to resolution processes.

It provides for an Adjudicating Authority (**AA**) to adjudicate matters in relation to insolvency proceedings. It designates the National Company Law Tribunal to act as the AA for corporate insolvency proceedings.

The market participants and insolvency professionals conduct processes in accordance with the IBC and the regulations and submit them to the AA for adjudication.

The AA provides that a tribunal cannot test the legality of the parent legislation but claims that it is competent to test the legality of regulations, including the competence of the IBBI to make a regulation.

Hence, AA has been striking down regulations in collateral proceedings which is one of the reasons behind the delay in insolvencies.

Moreover, other tribunals which have exceeded its jurisdiction have faced setbacks from the Supreme Court.

The Court ruled in 2010 (*PTC India Ltd vs Central Electricity Regulatory Commission*) and in 2013 (*BSNL vs Telecom Regulatory Authority of India*) that the appellate tribunal does not have the jurisdiction to entertain challenges to regulations framed by the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.

What can be the way ahead?

The shift to a market economy required two major changes – **a)** the institutional environment and **b)** the institutional arrangement.

The IBC provides the institutional environment but it needs to evolve with the dynamics of the ecosystem for the institutional arrangement (regulators and tribunals) for implementing the law to work efficiently.

Therefore, these agencies need to discharge their assigned roles and not take over others' roles for best results.

35. [Reckless spree – Authorities must heed science and people living near mines, dams](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Reckless spree – Authorities must heed science and people living near mines, dams**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster and disaster management.

Relevance: About protecting Hilly areas.

News: The land subsidence in Joshimath has highlighted geological disasters that have in fact manifested across India.

What are the other geological disasters?

There have been reports of **land subsidence** from **a)** Jharia, Bhurkunda, Kapasara, Raniganj and Talcher coal mines, **b)** Delhi and Kolkata due to the over-extraction of groundwater, and **c)** Mehsana for hydrocarbons.

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The land in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, began to sag shortly after a hydroelectric power project began test runs in the region.

Heavy rains in Aizawl triggered subsidence, exposing poor zoning enforcement and oversight of the regional carrying capacity.

Read more: [Who Tunnels Through A Sinking Town?](#)

What should be done to prevent further ecological disasters?

Accept scientific findings: Scientists from the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Geophysical Research Institute set out to examine the circumstances of the subsidence in Joshimath. Both the national and the State governments must agree to the team's findings, even if it means ceasing further construction work.

Repair and restore: The government must undertake whatever repair and restoration efforts it is undertaking at Joshimath at all the other sites as well.

Must read: [A mountain reeling under human aggression](#)

There is an argument to allow economically developing countries to emit more before becoming carbon-neutral. But that does not mean the government can plunder natural resources at the cost of climate justice.

36. [Bhopal's Real Lesson – Attempts to get more out of Carbide for the gas tragedy are futile. India needs good law on civil liability](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Bhopal's Real Lesson – Attempts to get more out of Carbide for the gas tragedy are futile. India needs good law on civil liability**” published in **The Times of India** on **12th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster Management.

Relevance: About compensation for industrial disasters.

News: The government filed a writ petition against the 1989 settlement directing Union Carbide Corporation to pay \$470 million (nearly Rs 750 crore) as damages for the 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy.

This is because, the settlement was panned for short-changing the victims, for being inadequate for environmental repairs and as an ineffective financial deterrent against gross negligence.

About Bhopal Gas Tragedy, and What are SC's remarks on increased compensation?

Read here: [Bhopal tragedy compensation fund of ₹50cr unutilised: SC](#)

The court held that demanding a settlement after over three decades could damage India's investment climate.

What are the present issues with deciding compensation?

At present, courts are arbitrarily deciding compensation. For instance, **a)** SC reduced the compensation decreed by Delhi high court to be paid in the Uphaar fire tragedy, **b)** SC set aside a Madras HC order that closed the Sterlite copper plant in Tuticorin but ordered the company to deposit Rs 100 crore with the district administration as pollution damages.

So to prevent such adhocism by the government and judiciary, **comprehensive legislation** is needed. It will help in promptly and accurately fixing civil liability for negligent conduct.

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37. [India's e-bus adoption ambitions require a financially sound plan](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India’s e-bus adoption ambitions require a financially sound plan**” published in the **Livemint** on **12th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About e-bus adoption.

News: At CoP-26 in Glasgow, India committed itself to a net-zero target by 2070 and set ambitious goals to achieve by 2030. Electrification of India’s public bus fleet is an important aspect of the agenda for clean energy to replace fossil fuels in the transport sector and help to curb carbon emissions.

What are the steps taken for e-bus adoption?

e-bus auctions: In 2022, India opened a window for ‘Grand Challenge’ bids. One of the world’s biggest tenders for electric buses, it sought 5,450 e-buses in five major cities.

Partnership agreements: State transport corporations (STC) form agreements with private players to operate buses in partnerships. Under this, the private operator procures buses, complete with batteries and battery charging systems, operates and maintains them, and the STCs provide land, infrastructure and other support.

What are the advantages of e-bus adoption?

The major advantages are its potential to address concerns of air pollution, climate change and, most importantly, escalating fuel bills. The other major advantage is,

Low operating cost: According to government tenders operating costs of e-buses were a modest ₹47.49 per km for the most expensive 12m low-floor air-conditioned e-bus. This is almost 30% less than the price of operating a diesel bus and 25-40% less than the price found by tendering processes for smaller quantities.

Read more: [Ministry of Road Transport & Highways -Annual report ‘Road accidents in India — 2021’](#)

What are the challenges in e-bus adoption?

High initial cost: Each e-bus costs about ₹1-1.5 crore. For companies to deliver buses against this tender, they have to raise a minimum of 70% as debt.

Financial condition of STCs: Of India’s 72 STCs, only six are financially stable. the rest have been loss-making for years. The average earnings of an STC is ₹35- 40-per-km, whereas the cost-per-km (of operating diesel buses) is upwards of ₹90.

Further, the financial health of STCs does not help them to procure loans as they have historical payment delays and failures.

What should be done to increase India’s e-bus adoption rate?

Project financing is key: The government must provide payment security, just as it has done for the renewable energy sector in a transformational way. It could start with a payment security fund until a longer-term institutional solution is put in place.

Dedicated institution: The public transport system in India needs a dedicated institution, like Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), to de-risk the market and raise capital. This entity needs to be capable of handling contract processes and also providing the necessary bankability to contracts. Over time, it could become the one-stop-shop responsible for the deployment of electric mobility in India.

Tripartite agreements: A tripartite agreement should be signed between the Centre, state governments and Reserve Bank of India. This should ensure state government guarantees on STC payments.

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[38. India may be in better economic shape to create a rupee trade zone](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India may be in better economic shape to create a rupee trade zone**” published in the **Business Standard** on **13th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Issues related to trade

News- The article explains the possibility of the rupee becoming a trade zone.

What was the situation in the past?

In the **early 1990s**, the modus operandi was to prepare export shipment documents from India in the name of Russian importers.

Goods were switched to some other destination and then Russian were paid 70-80% of the consignment value in hard currency.

It was **easy money**. But as more traders piled in; the commissions shrank to 5%. As a result, the trade fizzled out.

What does the statistics reveal about trade with Russia?

A **Business Standard analysis** found that India’s merchandise terms of trade from Russia has been worsening.

In 1992, as the Russian Federation was rebuilding after the breakup of the Soviet Union, India was a net exporter of goods.

The **situation reversed in 2003-04**, and terms of trade have worsened since.

India’s **exports to Russia have tripled** in the last two decades, but **imports from Russia have grown faster**.

What is the journey of rupee trade so far?

In the past, India did not make concessions on investment in government securities. Then, starved of foreign exchange, **India proposed bilateral rupee trade agreements**.

These agreements enabled India to import critical defence goods, often on easy rupee payment terms.

Agreements concluded between **1953 and 1958 accepted the rupee as the unit of account**, but imbalances were settled in **sterling or convertible currency**.

From 1959, payments for all transactions were to be affected in **inconvertible rupees**, and contracting countries agreed to hold rupee balances.

The value of the rupee was **fixed in terms of gold** for the purpose of these agreements until the **devaluation of the rupee in 1966** created issues with Russia over the rate of the currency.

Why is a rupee trading zone distinct possibility?

Unlike in the past, India can supply many goods, commodities and medicines to Russia to better balance the rupee trade. Russia is facing western sanctions

Such an arrangement may not be easy due to China’s growing influence. In 2001, [China](#) accounted for 3.9% of Russia’s total imports, whereas India’s share was 1.3 per cent. In **2021**, **a quarter of Russia’s imports were from China**, whereas India’s share had barely changed to 1.5 per cent.

[39. India missed a chance to reform the Public Distribution System](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India missed a chance to reform the Public Distribution System**” published in the **mint** on **13th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- PDS and Food security

Relevance: Issue related to distribution of foodgrains

News- The article explains the recent government move to end the PMGKY and the need to reform the Public Distribution System.

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The government finally **ended the free foodgrain scheme** under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) from 1 January.

What is the PMGKY?

The scheme was introduced as part of the pandemic relief effort in March 2020. It provided **5kg of free cereals, rice or wheat** to eligible Public Distribution System (PDS) beneficiaries.

PDS beneficiaries are entitled to **5kg of rice/wheat/millets at ₹3/2/1 per kg** as part of the **National Food Security Act (NFSA)**. The PMGKY was over and above that.

What are the reasons for the discontinuation of the scheme?

The primary reason for the discontinuation of the scheme is the **ballooning fiscal deficit** of the government.

This additional step will cost the government a small sum of ₹18,000 crore.

However, the impact of both these measures taken together is likely to be an **additional monthly spending of around ₹500-600** for a household of four members to purchase an additional 5kg from the market if they need it.

Why is this not the best option?

The PMGKY was meant to provide a cushion to the majority of rural and urban poor against the loss of income and employment during the pandemic.

While pandemic-related disruptions are over, most indicators of the rural economy suggest that **distress persists**.

Cereal inflation has been in double digits with no signs of slowing. The additional foodgrain could have been continued until inflationary pressures cooled.

A more serious matter of priority is for the government to **reform the PDS** as it exists today.

What is the way forward?

The PDS plays an **important role for consumers and farmers**. It enables the government to procure foodgrains for distribution. There is need take bold steps towards reforming the PDS in line with NFSA goals

Diversifying to oilseeds and pulses is essential to incentivize their production.

A better option would be **to expand the beneficiary roll** while **retaining subsidised issue prices** for food staples. That would have been a fiscally neutral step.

Government needs to **simply increase prices a little** to keep real prices constant. It enables the government to raise the quantum of grains given to beneficiaries without affecting its fiscal discipline. It is also possible to **provide pulses and edible oil**, which were given during the pandemic.

40. [Terra Pharma – WHO ruling on two India-made cough syrups should lead to a thorough, transparent investigation at home](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Terra Pharma – WHO ruling on two India-made cough syrups should lead to a thorough, transparent investigation at home**” published in **The Times of India** on **13th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the concerns with Indian cough syrups makers.

News: The production licence of a drug firm was suspended after the WHO edict that two cough syrups made by the company should not be used for children.

What are the recent concerns associated with Indian cough syrups makers?

a) Ambronol and DOK-1 Max were found in Indian drugs these contain toxic ethylene glycol. This is linked to 19 children’s deaths in Uzbekistan, **b)** A similar tragedy occurred in the Gambia

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where the deaths of 70 children were linked to the consumption of four contaminated syrups made by an Indian pharma manufacturer.

In both cases, poor manufacturing of solvents used in the medicines is the reason behind the issue.

Note: Medicines manufactured for export to rich countries are made according to the specifications of the importing country.

Must read: [Uzbekistan says 18 children die due to cough syrup made by an Indian firm; blame it on ethylene glycol](#)

Why is this a cause of concern for the Indian pharma sector?

Problems in India: These products were not sold in India. The medicines manufactured for use in India generally meet adequate standards. However, the problem of fake or less-than-ideally-effective pills persists.

Loss of India's reputation: The malpractices of Indian pharma companies will create a wrong impact on India's manufacturing/regulatory capability.

What should be done to ensure proper manufacturing of pharma products?

The government must **undertake a thorough and transparent inquiry** focussed on the supply chain. This should happen from vendors of active pharmaceutical ingredients to the manufacturing process to regulatory processes.

The government should **ensure proper pharma manufacturing standards** in India.

India deserves the tag 'pharmacy of the world'. But with that tag, India should **understand the global responsibility of ensuring the strictest standards** for products.

41. [Costa Rica's rainforest canopies tower 150 feet tall — these are the last biotic frontier](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Costa Rica's rainforest canopies tower 150 feet tall — these are the last biotic frontier**" published in **The Times of India** on **14th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: importance canopies of rainforests

News: Research has been carried out on the canopies of the rainforests of Costa Rica. This article discusses the features and impacts of rainforest canopies.

What are some important features of rainforest canopies?

Canopy when compared to forest floor is full of **sunshine, windier, and with extremes temperature and humidity**.

This is because the **diversity of plants and animals evolved to live in this micro-environment could not be even seen in the forest floors**.

Canopies also perform several functions such as **capture nutrients** and provide resources for birds, mammals and insects.

Therefore, **anything which affects canopies impacts the rainforest as a whole**.

Moreover, canopies are also known as the **last biotic frontier** because it is very hard to reach those canopies as they are at a great height from the forest floor.

What are epiphytes and what are their roles in the forests?

Epiphytes are plants which grow on the trunks and branches of trees. They lack roots due to which they don't get nutrients from trees or the ground.

Instead, **they derive nutrients from rainfall, mist and cloud**. When they perish and fall to the forest floor, they pass these nutrients to other members of the ecosystem.

So, these **epiphytes function as giant sponges in the canopy** which move nutrient resources down into the forest ecosystem.

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Further, in the research it was found that one-third of all the bird visits were to the epiphytes, not the host tree. Hence, epiphytes play an important role in the lives of the birds and animals occupying such rainforests.

What is the importance of rainforest canopies in human life?

It **produces oxygen and material for medicines**. Therefore, Costa Rica is also trying to conserve the rainforest due to their wide uses and benefits.

42. [Take a step to regulate deepfakes](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Take a step to regulate deepfakes”** published in **The Hindu** on **14th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3-Science and Technology

Relevance: Artificial Intelligence related issues

News- The article explains the need to regulate deepfakes.

What are Deepfakes?

Deepfakes leverage powerful techniques from **machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI)** to manipulate or generate visual and audio content with a high potential to deceive.

What are the issues associated with deepfakes?

First, deepfake videos can be used to spread **misinformation and propaganda**.

Second, there has been a history of using deepfakes to depict someone in a compromising and embarrassing situation. For instance, there is no dearth of **deepfake pornographic material** of celebrities.

Third, deepfakes have been used for **financial fraud**. Recently, scammers used AI-powered software to trick the CEO of a U.K. energy company over the phone into believing he was speaking with the head of the German parent company.

Fourth, Deepfakes can be used to **influence elections**. Recently, Taiwan’s cabinet approved amendments to election laws to punish the sharing of deepfake videos or images.

Fifth, Deepfakes can also be used to carry out **espionage activities**. Doctored videos can be used to blackmail government and defence officials into divulging state secrets.

What are the existing provisions related to deep fakes?

Section 500 of the IPC provides punishment for defamation.

Sections 67 and 67A of the Information Technology Act punish sexually explicit material in explicit form.

The Representation of the People Act, 1951, includes provisions prohibiting the creation or distribution of false or misleading information about candidates or political parties during an election period.

The Election Commission of India has set rules that require registered political parties and candidates to get **pre-approval for all political advertisements** on electronic media.

However, these rules do not address the potential dangers posed by deepfake content.

Why is there a need to regulate Deepfakes?

The lack of proper regulations creates avenues for individuals, firms and even non-state actors to misuse AI.

In India, the legal framework related to AI is **insufficient to adequately address** the various issues that have arisen due to AI algorithms.

The Union government should introduce **separate legislation** regulating the nefarious use of deepfakes and the **broader subject of AI**.

China is one of the few countries which has introduced regulations prohibiting the use of deepfakes deemed harmful to national security or the economy.

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The proposed **Digital India Bill** can also address this issue. We can't always rely on the policy of self-regulation.

43. [Asia's prospects: Status quo or a rougher ride?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Asia's prospects: Status quo or a rougher ride?**" published in **Business Standard** on **16th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economy

Relevance: Development model in Asia and issues associated with it.

News: The article discusses the prevailing Asia's development model and the problems associated with it.

What are the features of Asia's development model?

Asia's development model is mainly based on – **a)** the way in which governments have used industrial policy to help new sectors and businesses develop, **b)** government's reliance on business groups which is mostly absent in the advanced economies.

However, such reliance on business groups has negative consequences for the economy.

What are the issues with reliance on business groups?

Business groups and politicians both rely on each other for their mutual benefits.

For example, businesses protect politicians from competitors, provide them with cheap loans, subsidies, and public-sector contracts whereas politicians provide support through state-led initiatives, etc.

However, the problem with such business groups is that the **market power is accumulated in few hands**.

This power allows them to **control the economy of a nation** because of their large share in the economy. **For example**, the revenues of the largest 10 businesses account for around 15 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in **India and China**.

Further, businesses having connections with politicians do not allow the way for new businesses to come up in the market. Thus, it **decreases the competition**.

This decrease in competition **withholds productivity growth and limits the number of high-quality jobs**.

It also **limits the scope of innovation** in any economy as resources are controlled by few and those companies which are good at innovation are unable to access the resources.

It further leads to **accumulation of wealth in few hands** along with capturing a large amount of economic territory of a nation.

Therefore, these kinds of connections between the politicians and business groups make other businesses and entrepreneurs unable to compete with large business groups along with workers unable to get good jobs.

What steps can be taken to improve these connections?

First, it will require a strict policy for the transformation. **For example**, the US under Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s addressed the problem of business groups by prohibiting families acquiring the businesses and related-party transactions while enhancing protection for minority shareholders.

Second, coming up with additional tax on the ownership format can also be an effective incentive to change. **For example**, South Korea has introduced a high inheritance tax which aims to limit family control across generations.

Third, there is the need to limit the scope for politicians to benefits their business connections by bringing greater transparency and the strengthening of civil society

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44. [Share, Don't Gag – on land subsidence in Joshimath](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “Share, Don't Gag”, published in **The Times of India** on **16th January, 2022**.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Disaster Management

News: The National Disaster Management Authority has ordered government institutions and officials to not share any information about land subsidence in Joshimath.

The order will stay in force till the final report of NDMA's expert group is submitted.

The order is followed by the satellite report of ISRO that indicates subsidence of about 9 cm in seven months.

NDMA's gag order is the second such instance in the recent past. A few weeks back ICAR issued a similar one for GM mustard.

What are the issues with restricting the information flow?

First, NDMA's report will come after a long time. The information vacuum left by the government will be filled by sources that can be untrue.

Second, satellite pictures of the region are not limited to ISRO's, and plenty of foreign scientists are working on the Joshimath subsidence.

Third, global experience of Covid teaches us that stringent restrictions on the information flow is self-defeating.

Fourth, debates and disagreements expand the boundaries of knowledge and restricting information and debate trigger suspicion.

45. [India, Qatar and the continuing saga of eight detained ex-Indian Navy officers](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “India, Qatar and the continuing saga of eight detained ex-Indian Navy officers”, published in Indian Express on 16th January, 2022.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Disaster Management

News: Eight retired Indian Navy personnel were arrested by Qatari authorities in August. They have been in imprisonment for 127 days in Doha on Saturday (January 14). Each has been kept in solitary confinement for the whole period of four and a half months.

What are the accusations against navy personnel?

It is reported that most of the arrested men had been working at Dahra for four to six years at the time of their arrests. The men were arrested by the State Security Bureau, the Qatari intelligence agency in Sep, 2022.

Although, the charges against the men have not been made public, but their solitary confinement has led to speculation that they have been detained in connection with a security-related offence. Neither family members, nor MEA officials are informed of the charges against them.

India and Qatar friendly ties

After the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit in November 2008, the relations between both countries are improving.

In 2021, India was among the top four export destinations for Qatar, and is also among the top three sources of Qatar's imports. The bilateral trade is valued at \$15 billion, which is mostly LNG and LPG exports from Qatar worth over \$13 billion.

Defence co-operation signed in 2008, has been officially described as a “pillar” of Indian-Qatar ties. The pact included training of the QENF by India, as well as mutual visits.

QENF delegations participated in two maritime exercises in India last year

Last year, the two sides agreed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2023.

Challenges in India Qatar relations

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First, recently, comments of one of the spokes persons of India's ruling party, against Prophet sparked the controversy and Qatar demanded a public apology from India. The controversy was resolved after party sacked the spokesperson.

Second, the jailing of the eight ex-Navy personnel is the second big challenge. 800,000 Indians live and work in Qatar. India's inability to resolve the issue quickly is sending wrong signal.

Third, there is an agreement between India and Qatar on the transfer of convicted prisoners to India, to serve their sentence. However, this case is still in the pre-trial stage and no charges have been framed against them yet.

Fourth, the softly approach by the government in this case is a shift from the approach of the late Sushma Swaraj. She made the welfare of Indians abroad her priority by reaching out personally to those in trouble or their families, including sending an air ambulance for a health emergency.

Fifth, in November 2019, then Southern Navy Command chief Rear Admiral R J Nadkarni told a meeting of an ex-sailors' forum in Kochi that the Navy had taken measures to provide placement opportunities for retired personnel. He informed the meeting that MoU had been signed with the Qatar Navy in this regard. There would be more such agreements with other friendly nations. This incident will hinder the progress of this approach.

46. [MV Ganga Vilas: A welcome push for riverine tourism](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “MV Ganga Vilas: A welcome push for riverine tourism” published in **The Indian Express** on **16th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance– Issues related to tourism sector

News– The article explains the potential of riverine tourism in India.

Recently, the Prime Minister launched the MV Ganga Vilas from Varanasi.

What are some facts about MV Ganga Vilas?

The luxury 51-day cruise will be operated in partnership with private players by the **Inland Waterways Authority**.

It will traverse several states, two countries and make stops at about 50 tourist and heritage sites along the **Ganga and Brahmaputra river systems**.

It will **generate employment** for people living in these states.

What is the way forward to ensure sustainable growth in riverine tourism?

The **employment generation** must go hand-in-hand with ecological repair.

Issues of **silting and pollution** must be addressed by the government to realise its goal to increase cruise passenger traffic.

Sustainable growth is possible if it **involves local communities**.

There is **huge potential** for expansion of larger, luxury liners, riverine tourism. But, the expansion must take into account the **best practices** from around India and the world. Also, smaller vessels may pose less of an **ecological challenge**.

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47. [Why the government ought not to intervene with Amul](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Why the government ought not to intervene with Amul**” published in **The Indian Express** on **16th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Marketing of Agricultural Produce and Issues and Related Constraints

Relevance– Marketing of animal husbandry products

News– The article explains the difference between cooperative and company. It tells about Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation and reasons for its success. It also raises question marks on Sodhi’s recent exit as MD of GCMMF.

What is the difference between cooperative and companies?

Companies– They are **investor-owned entities**. They exist primarily to maximise their return on capital. The investors main goal is capital appreciation and the highest possible price for the shares.

Cooperatives– They are organisations owned by members. They could be **producers or consumers**. These members may own shares. But, they value the cooperative mainly for the services provided by them.

Success in this case does not depend on **earnings per share**. But the **procurement price** of produce and the **timeliness of payment** or the provision of **quality cattle feed, farm extension and animal healthcare support, fertilisers and credit at least cost** decides the success of the venture.

What is Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation and how it has benefited the farmers of Gujarat?

It is **apex organisation of dairy cooperatives** in Gujarat. It is owned by 36.4 lakh farmers pouring milk to 18,154 village-level societies across the state.

Between 2001-02 and 2021-22, GCMMF’s sales turnover rose from Rs 2,336 crore to Rs 46,481 crore.

In the last 20 years, the **average procurement price** paid to producers by GCMMF has gone up from Rs 184 to Rs 820 per kg of fat.

The **producer’s share** is over 80% in the price paid by consumers. It means farmers are getting the **highest possible share** in the consumer rupee.

What are the main reasons behind the success of Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation?

The main reason is **professional management**. The Amul organisational model has been based on an **elected board of directors**. They operate through a chief executive and his team, which include marketing and finance professionals, project engineers, veterinarians, agronomists and nutritionists.

This model has made GCMMF different from other state dairy cooperative federations. Their managing directors are usually IAS officers. They report to secretaries of animal husbandry and dairying departments. It makes boards and their managers **non-accountable** to farmers.

Why is the recent exit of the current MD raises some disturbing questions?

There is a long established tradition that **political calculations** will not impact the business operations of the cooperative.

There were reports that the decision to remove him was taken at a **political level**. It reduces GCMMF to a government departmental undertaking and with a board that’s **neither independent nor accountable** to farmers

During his 12 years as MD, GCMMF’s turnover went up nearly six times. The federation also began procuring from farmers in other states.

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[48. Why is Kerala opposing the new Electricity Rules?](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Why is Kerala opposing the new Electricity Rules?**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

Relevance– Issues related to electricity sector

News– The article explains the recently released gazette notification on the Electricity (Amendment) Rules, 2022.

Kerala had fiercely objected to Rule 14.

What are the new rules?

The Centre introduced the **Electricity (Amendment) Rules, 2022**, to amend the **Electricity Rules, 2005**.

Rule 14 of the Rules requires the **State electricity regulatory commission** to specify a price adjustment formula. It will **automatically pass on the costs** through the consumer tariff on a monthly basis. It will be done without going through the **regulatory approval process**.

What has been Kerala’s stand?

It has argued that giving Discoms the freedom to automatically pass on the costs through the electricity bill **endangers consumer interests**.

The amendment will lead to an **unstable pricing situation** in the power sector, akin to that of petrol and diesel prices. Consumers would be subjected to **frequent price fluctuations**.

The crucial role played by the **State Electricity Commission** in fixing the surcharge would get diluted.

What is the role of the regulator?

Until now, KSEB filed a petition for collecting the **thermal fuel surcharge** from the Kerala **State Electricity Regulatory Commission** on a quarterly basis.

Kerala produces only 30% of its electricity demand within its borders. The **power purchase expenditure**, especially during the summer months is quite substantial because of **increasing demand**.

In the normal course of things, the Commission finalises a decision on the KSEB plea after holding a **public hearing**. According to the State government, doing away with this prudence check would impact the general public.

[49. Five priorities for India Inc could help us reach ahead of the curve](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Five priorities for India Inc could help us reach ahead of the curve**” published in **Live Mint** on **17th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economy

Relevance: **priorities need to be adopted by Indian private companies to make India a global leader**

News: The article discusses the priorities which Indian private sector should have in order to make India the leader in the global economy.

What are the priorities which Indian private companies should focus on?

Take sustainability seriously: According to a McKinsey report, effective decarbonization would require India to spend \$7.2 trillion on green initiatives.

This is a big amount but it would also offer an opportunity to build sustainably from the start as around **75% of the industrial capacity that will exist in India in 2050 is not yet built**.

Moreover, businesses have the opportunity to become global leaders in areas such as green steel, hydrogen, carbon capture and clean tech because these all are at a nascent stage.

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Further, India is a **major exporter of two- and three-wheeled vehicles**. So, it could also use this position to lead the change to electric vehicles (EVs).

Effective capital spending strategies: In recent years, most capital expenditure (capex) in India has been driven by government spending and by public-sector companies.

However, **there has been low growth in net fixed assets** along with little growth in the productive base of many large companies.

Therefore, companies that have proper spending plans can execute capex projects faster and more cost-effectively, positioning themselves for sustained growth.

Increase in innovation: India has improved its ranking from 81st in the 2015 **Global Innovation Index to 40th in 2022**. However, there is room for even more improvement.

Indian companies account for less than 40% of total research and development (R&D) spending compared to more than 65% of large economies.

Therefore, Indian companies can examine themselves and learn their 'innovation quotient' (IQ), which evaluates their readiness, strengths and execution capabilities.

Further, large manufacturers could **incentivize innovation among** their suppliers by offering grants for breakthrough innovations.

Companies could also work together to **create innovation clusters or economic hubs** where capital, expertise and talent collaborate on nascent technologies.

Build digital technology capabilities: The global tech services market is expected to grow about 5% annually in the coming years. India's digital consumer sector is also growing fast and India's consumer digital economy could be a \$1 trillion market in just a few years.

One of the efforts taken by the government is by bringing **Open Network for Digital Commerce**. It may help by cutting costs and enhancing interoperability. However, it will be upon businesses to make e-commerce and digitization a reality for most Indians.

Further, there is a **need to re-skill workers in traditional tech services and take advantage of new opportunities**. Creating industry-wide skills and certification would be of help.

Recognize that resilience and growth go together: Indian companies can strengthen their resilience by building stronger relationships with suppliers and localizing operations along with focusing on growth.

There is a **need to build partnerships that prepare companies to address disruptions**, such as energy security, cyber shocks and weather events.

Further, business leaders can build positions that would enable them to take advantage of new and emerging opportunities.

India could also use its low labour costs and manufacturing expertise to capture up to \$1.2 trillion in global trade flows by 2030.

[50. Social equaliser – While promoting digital payments, care is needed to guard against cyber threats](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Social equaliser – While promoting digital payments, care is needed to guard against cyber threats**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th January 2023**

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

Relevance: About initiatives to promote digital payments.

News: The Union Cabinet has recently earmarked ₹2,600 crores for providing banks with an incentive to promote digital payments. This has focused attention to broaden and deepen alternatives to the most widely accepted method of payment worldwide, cash.

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About the recent push to promote digital payments

Read more: [Centre earmarks ₹2,600 crore as incentive for banks to promote digital payments](#)

What are the other measures that promote digital payments?

National Payments Corporation of India and its Unified Payments Interface (UPI): It functions as a lynchpin transaction enabler. The December 2022 transaction was a 71% jump in volume and a 55% increase in value from a year earlier, the UPI volume last month was close to 54 times the transactions in December 2017, and a staggering 98.6-fold of the value seen five years earlier.

Indigenous RuPay credit and debit cards: These indigenous initiatives does not require Merchant Discount Rate (MDR), thus benefiting Indian banks.

Role of private financial technology or fintech firms: They offer tailor-made digital applications. Big technology and social media companies have also added digital payments to enhance their core offerings.

What is the need to promote digital payments?

-The Reserve Bank of India's 'Payments Vision 2025' document observes that 'payment systems foster **economic development and financial stability**' while supporting **financial inclusion**.

-The rapid and widespread adoption of digital payment methods, coupled with steps to bring more people into the banking system's fold, has significantly helped **cut the reliance on cash for low-value transactions**, especially in metros and cities.

Read more: [UPI and Digital Payments in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to further promote digital payments?

Policymakers need to urgently **ring-fence the wealth of individual spending data** being generated and **constantly enhance security** to safeguard the payments system from cyberthreats.

51. [Cleaning up FCI's operations](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Cleaning up FCI's operations**" published in **Business Standard** on **18th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Issues Related to Development

Relevance: measures required to bring reforms in Food Corporation of India (FCI).

News: CBI carried out "**Operation Kanak**" that revealed the corruption in Food Corporation of India (FCI).

What is the issue with the FCI and what has been the response of the government?

The FIR filed by the CBI reveals that FCI officials charged between Rs 1,000 and Rs 4,000 per truckload from rice millers for accepting substandard grains and extending other favours to them.

The nexus, involving FCI officials, private grain traders, rice millers, and various others, has been revealed through raids.

Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal called it a "**wake-up call**" and also urged to follow the "**zero tolerance policy for corruption**" in the FCI.

However, there are views that there might be more corruption involved in the FCI, given its scale of operation. Therefore, there is a need to bring reform in the FCI.

What reforms are required in the functioning of FCI?

There is a need to bring **strict vigilance and use of technology** in FCI operations and making its functioning fully transparent.

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The suggestion given by the **food minister in a five-point agenda** such as the use of **transparency-oriented technology**, including CCTV, in the entire chain of operations, from procurement to delivery, can be inculcated.

There is also a need to **set up a grievance redress mechanism** for those who have to interact directly with FCI functionaries.

However, the urgent need is to carry forward the process of structural and functional **reforms suggested by the Shanta Kumar Committee**.

One of the **recommendations of the committee was the decentralisation of the food management system** by giving greater responsibilities to state governments.

Most states now produce enough cereals to meet their requirements. So, they can be asked to procure, store, and distribute these grains on their own with the supervision of the FCI.

This would reduce the workload of the FCI, thereby reducing the scope for corruption.

52. A case for reassigning GST to States

Source– The post is based on the article “**A case for reassigning GST to States**” published in **The Hindu** on **18th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance– Issues related to fiscal policy

News- The article explains the fiscal imbalances between centre and states. It explains the need for assigning the entire GST to states.

What are some facts about GST?

The Union and State governments concurrently levy GST on commodities with 50% as Central GST and 50% as State GST. There is an **Integrated GST on inter-State trade**, so that 50% of it goes to the final destination State.

The GST is a **harmonised tax** on commodities across the country. Individual States have little power to unilaterally change this tax. The **GST Council** gives the Union government a veto to thrust its preferences on the States.

What are some statistics and facts about fiscal imbalances between centre and states in recent times?

The simplest empirical measure of **vertical fiscal imbalance** is the formula- ‘**VFI equals one minus the ratio of the State’s own revenue to own expenditure**’.

If this VFI ratio is zero, the States have enough own revenue to meet their own expenditure and there is no need for **financial transfers**.

If we look at the data for all the States over the periods of the **last three Finance Commissions**, the VFI ratio shows an increasing trend. For the latest period of 2015-16 to 2020-21, the ratio was 0.530. It means that only 47% of the States’ own expenditure was financed by their own revenue in that period.

In this period, four major changes took place. First, the **divisible taxes** of the Union government expanded from two to all the Union taxes. It enlarged the **revenue base** to be shared with the States.

Second, **fiscal responsibility legislation** was implemented to constrain the **fiscal deficits** of the States. States directly borrow from the market subject to limits imposed by the Union government.

Third, the **Union Planning Commission** was dissolved. It led to the withdrawal of **Plan grants**.

Fourth, GST was introduced in 2017.

These changes have considerably altered the States’ revenue structure. States have **little revenue autonomy** and are more dependent on the Union government.

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What is the way forward to reduce fiscal imbalances between centre and states?

CGST and the excise duty on petroleum products should be assigned to the states. There is a need to bring all commodities, including petroleum products, under GST.

The Union government should continue to **collect IGST** only to settle revenue on a **destination basis**. This will ensure **harmonisation of GST** across States.

GST shall continue as a tax determined by the **GST Council**. However, the **veto power** of the Union government should be removed. This may once again require some **constitutional amendments**.

Commodity taxation should be moved to **State List II of the Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution, with a rider that **harmonisation of commodity taxation** should be maintained.

The **tax base of the GST, namely consumption**, is not equally distributed among the States. It creates **horizontal fiscal imbalance** among the States. Therefore, the Union government should effect **equalisation transfers** to address this issue of **horizontal fiscal inequality**.

What will be the impact of these measures?

The assignment of excise duty on petroleum products to the States will hasten the process of **integrating taxes** on petroleum products into GST. It will remove the **cascading effects** of the current excise duty on petroleum products.

The reassignment of tax will **increase the tax revenue** of the States. This will also **improve accountability** of the States to their people on fiscal matters.

VFI will come down. All the States' own expenditure can be financed by their own revenue resources. The need for **assigning share in Central taxes and grants in aid** does not arise.

[53. Role of private sector in space: India's rocket dreams ready for a lift-off](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"INDIA'S ROCKET DREAMS READY FOR A LIFT-OFF"** published in the **Livemint** on **18th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Achievements of Indians in science & technology.

Relevance: About the role of the private sector in space.

News: Barring ISRO, no other organization was building satellites (or rockets) in India in 2008. The role of private players has increased manifold since then.

Though India has a long way to go to catch up with the likes of the US, Russia and China, it is an endeavour well begun.

How has the role of the private sector in space increased since then?

-Chennai's SRM University has built the **SRMSat**. It was designed to address pollution by monitoring carbon dioxide and water vapour in the atmosphere.

Dhruva Space: The company launched Thybolt-1 and Thybolt-2. Now many foreign entities are in talks with Dhruva Space to build and launch their satellites. It is a part of India's space odyssey 2.0.

Agnikul Cosmos: It works to capture a small satellite launch market. It is developing rockets fuelled by its patented semi-cryogenic engines and 3-D prints the rockets.

Digantara: The company wants to address the problem of space debris and has developed an in-orbit device that will track it. It also plans to launch a constellation of 40 satellites to gather data on space junk in low-earth orbit (LEO).

Pixxel: The company wants to build a constellation of 24 hyper spectral micro satellites (launched three demo satellites in 2022), which will act as an "MRI scanner" of Earth.

They will monitor deforestation, track air and water pollution, check forest biodiversity, as well as coastal and marine health apart from changes in the urban landscape.

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Skyroot Aerospace: Recently, it launched [Vikram-S](#), India's first private rocket, from Isro's launch facility at Sriharikota.

Airtel-backed **OneWeb** is in the process of launching 648 small satellites in LEO mode to provide its high-speed satellite internet service.

Read more: [Year-End Review -2022: Department of Space](#)

What led to an increased role of the private sector in space?

Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe): It is the regulatory entity facilitating the private sector's participation in the space industry.

Ever since its operationalization, over 100 companies have come up in this sector and in 2022 they raised as much as \$110 million, which is more than what private space players had raised cumulatively till 2021.

The success of SpaceX: With its Starlink satellites, SpaceX demonstrated the profit for private players.

Advantages of smaller satellites: Smaller satellites use industry-grade rather than space-grade components. Further, these smaller satellites are parked closer to earth, where radiation is lower and has a shorter lifespan. Moreover, while an INSAT class satellite will cost at least ₹400 crores, smaller satellites can be built for just ₹10 crores.

Above all, they do not need large launch vehicles such as the PSLV or GSLV, which cost ₹300 crore and ₹450 crores, respectively.

Note: According to European Space Agency data, anywhere between 70,000 to 100,000 satellites will be launched in the next 15 years and over 80% will be small satellites weighing less than 500 kg.

What are the limiting factors in increasing the role of the private sector in space?

Funding: India's space budget of \$1.7 billion (in 2022) was minuscule compared to the US's \$30 billion and China's \$14 billion (which includes \$1 billion from its private players).

Space assets: While the US had 1,650 space assets and China had 450, India's, at last count, had less than 100.

Long neglect of the commercial space market: India's share in the \$440 billion global space market is just 2%. The government wants to increase this share to 10% through the private sector, which will be able to attract large-scale private capital.

What will be the role of ISRO if the role of the private sector in space is the future?

a) The private sector will rely on ISRO for infrastructure—be it launch facilities, tracking systems, technology transfers and capacity building, **b)** ISRO will focus on scientific missions such as focussing on deep-space missions, and putting an Indian in space through its Gaganyaan mission. There by passing on the commercial business to the private sector.

Note: ISRO has set up NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL) to handle the commercial end of the business.

At present, **India needs a space policy**, which can be clear and liberal on private players.

54. [Crisis in the Himalayas](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Crisis in the Himalayas**" published in the **Business Standard** on **18th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster and disaster management.

Relevance: About protecting the Himalayan Ecosystem.

News: The Himalayan town Joshimath is under tremendous stress, and a portion of it has started sinking. The real issue has always been about pursuing development without working on environmental sustainability.

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About Joshimath

Read here: [Who Tunnels Through A Sinking Town?](#)

What are the other major disasters that happened in the Himalayan Ecosystem?

Read here: [Reckless spree – Authorities must heed science and people living near mines, dams](#)

What are the challenges faced by Hilly areas?

Read more: [A mountain reeling under human aggression](#)

-Environmental impact assessment of a particular project does not capture the cumulative impact of a series of such projects in a river basin.

-In recent years, the twin demands of both religion and defence have been added to the development argument. This kept aside environmental and terrain considerations.

What should be done to protect the Himalayan ecosystem?

In the Himalayan zone, **hydro projects should generally be of the run-of-the-river variety** since large-scale water storage reservoirs can greatly disturb a terrain that is seismically unstable and still shifting.

Respecting religious sentiments should not mean constructing six-lane highways to sacred pilgrim spots deep in the Himalayas. Similarly, for defence, improved access in the short term should not come at the cost of seriously disrupted communications in the longer term due to disasters.

There is an urgent need to **undertake a detailed survey** by multidisciplinary expert teams. This is to understand the nature and scale of the challenge with the Himalayan ecosystem. The government must both halt and then reverse the disturbing trends that are intensifying day by day.

55. [The conflict behind eco-sensitive zones](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The conflict behind eco-sensitive zones**” published in **The Hindu** on **19th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment conservation

Relevance– Issues related to protected areas

News– The article explains the concept of protected areas and ESZ. It explains the issues related to the concept of ESZ. It also tells about the reason for recent protests in Kerala due to creation of these zones.

What are protected areas?

Protected areas cover 5.26% of India’s land area as 108 national parks and 564 wildlife sanctuaries. They are notified under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972**. Protected areas do away with even the activities permitted in ‘**reserve forests**’

The **rights of forest-dependent communities** are impacted. Therefore, this conservation model has come under repeated criticism from conservation scientists.

It led to the bringing of the **Forest Rights Act, 2006**. FRA recognizes the **customary and traditional rights** of forest-dwellers on forest land, including in protected areas.

How is the FRA being implemented?

FRA was an attempt to undo the **historic injustice** done to the forest-dwelling community of India. The MoEFCC reckoned in 2009 that it needs to hand over at least four lakh sq. km to village-level institutions. But as of June 2022, **only 16%** has come under the FRA.

However, this has been achieved in only a decade and a half. This is attributed to the **gram sabhas** which took over the power to determine rights through open democratic process from government officials.

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These **gram sabhas** are now the statutory authorities empowered to **conserve, protect and manage** forests, and wildlife lying within the traditional village boundaries.

These areas under gram sabhas come under a new category of forests called '**community forest resource**' (CFR). Gram sabhas have to integrate their **CFR conservation and management plan** into the **working plan of the Forest Department**, with the required modifications.

What are ESZs?

What are the issues with ESZ?

Significantly, parts of the ESZs in ten States fall within the Scheduled Areas notified under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. They are mostly populated by Scheduled Tribe groups.

The Provisions of the PESA Act, 1996 apply in these areas. The PESA recognises **gram sabhas competence to safeguard and preserve** community resources on forest and revenue lands in Scheduled Areas.

However, the MoEFCC has shown no inclination to amend the Indian Forest Act 1927, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Environment (Protection) Act 1986 to comply with the PESA and FRA.

How exactly were the ESZs implemented?

In 2005, the **National Board for Wildlife** decided to delineate **site-specific ESZs** to regulate specific activities instead of prohibiting them. In May 2005, the MoEFCC asked the States and UTs to propose ESZs.

The **MoEFCC guidelines for ESZs** stated that a **committee** consisting of the Wildlife Warden, an ecologist, and an official from the local government will determine the **extent of each ESZ**. It will be based on the forest rangers' inventory of land-use and wildlife corridors within 10 km of each protected area.

The **Chief Wildlife Warden** was to then list the activities that were to be **prohibited, restricted and permitted**.

After this process, the State government would submit this list, the **geographical description** of the area and the **biodiversity values**, the **rights and entitlements** of local communities, and their **economic potential and implications** for their livelihoods, as a proposal to the MoEFCC for notification.

Within two years of notification, the State government is required to draft a **Zonal Master Plan** for each ESZ in consultation with a number of departments.

State government has to set up a **monitoring committee for each ESZ** to monitor compliance with the various provisions of each notification. The committee is required to report the actions taken to the Chief Wildlife Warden every year.

The guidelines and the ESZ notifications disregarded many **legal facts and statutory requirements**. They set aside the **gram sabhas** in Scheduled Area and CFR forests and the **Panchayati-raj institutions**. It follows a '**one size fits all**' approach.

What has led to the protests?

In June, 2022, the Supreme Court gave further directions on ESZs. Court said that the MoEFCC guidelines are also to be implemented in the area proposed in the **draft notification awaiting finalisation** and within a 10-km radius of **yet-to-be-proposed protected areas**.

The Court also allowed States to **increase or decrease the minimum width of ESZs**. It vested the powers to **ensure compliance** with the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and the Home Secretary of the State.

The PCCF was to make a list of all structures within the ESZs and report it to the Supreme Court within three months. The Court also ordered that **no new permanent structure** could come up for any purpose within an ESZ.

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This effectively meant that all the activities can continue only if the PCCF grants permission. The Court's directions have put the lives of many people in the **hands of the PCCF**. Its authority now extends **beyond the forest to revenue lands** falling within an ESZ.

The **new structures** that are banned could include electric poles, buildings, walls, roads and bridges. Millions of forest-dwellers living on forest land and on the fringes of forests are the most affected.

56. Margin of safety

Source– The post is based on the article “**Margin of safety**” published in the **Business Standard** on **19th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance– Issues related to money and capital markets

News– The article explains the recently released consultation paper “**Blocking of Funds for Trading in Secondary Market**” for public comment by SEBI

It seeks to extend the **application supported by the blocked amount (ASBA) system** to the secondary market.

What is ASBA In the Primary market?

When an investor applies for shares in an IPO, a **security** is placed on the requisite funds. It remains in the **investor's bank account** and generates interest. If the allotment occurs, the funds are transferred. If it doesn't occur, the money goes to investor

What is the reason behind this move of SEBI?

The objective is to **eliminate the need to transfer funds in advance** to a broker. Therefore, it reduces **chances of misuse or losses** caused by broker defaults.

In the secondary market, investors have to submit **collateral or transfer funds** in advance to the broker before executing a trade. This results in brokerages holding substantial sums. This practice also places the **investor's funds at risk** in case the broker defaults.

What method has been suggested by SEBI for creating ASBA mechanism for the secondary market?

The regulator believes that it can use the **new multiple debits facility for the Unified Payments Interface** to create a new ASBA mechanism.

This will allow investors to block funds in their bank account for trading in the secondary market, instead of transferring upfront to the broker. When the trade occurs, the funds would be transferred directly to the clearing corporation.

Brokerage and securities transaction tax may be deducted by the clearing corporation and passed on to brokers, or paid directly by investors to them.

What are the main concerns related to this new proposal?

There is a need to ensure a level playing field. Brokerages that are subsidiaries of banks can offer **3-in-1 accounts**. The brokerage can access the funds and demat account when the need arises.

Standalone brokerages currently compete by charging lower fees, offering more advisory support and more flexible margins. The ASBA for the secondary market may be in favour of bank-backed brokerages.

The technicalities are much more complex for secondary market trades. An IPO is a **static process**. There is only one security involved and only one agency handling allotment.

Reconciling IPO accounts is not difficult.

Secondary-market operations involve **far more stakeholders and far more instruments**, including equities, derivatives, and forex and commodity futures. Each has different prices and different margins.

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A trade may be placed simultaneously on both exchanges. There are **massive volumes** of such highly dynamic trades. The secondary ASBA mechanism would have to be **well designed and stress-tested** to prevent slowdowns, and glitches in practice.

57. Prioritising stability over growth

Source– The post is based on the article “**Prioritising stability over growth**” published in the **Business Standard** on **20th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and issues relating to growth

Relevance– Issues related to fiscal policy

News– The article explains the economic outlook for India. It also provide some suggestions for the upcoming budget

What is the economic outlook for India?

Positive side– The **National Statistical Office** forecast a 7% gross domestic product growth for 2022-23. The threat presented by the Covid is relatively very low.

Negative side– **Combined fiscal deficit** of around 10%. The **current account deficit** projected at over 3.5%, and **core inflation** sticking to 6% can not be a very good sign for the economy. NSO’s forecast figures for the current year are subject to revision.

On the international front, there is uncertainty about the **Russia-Ukraine conflict**. Many economists are predicting an **imminent global recession**.

What are some suggestions for the upcoming budget?

It would be wise to have policies which favour **financial and economic stability** over growth aspirations in the near term. The temptation to **loosen fiscal policy** should be resisted at this stage.

The government should contain its **revenue expenditure**. The Union Budget on February 1 will be followed by state governments’ budgets. The Government of India needs to set the right example by not yielding to populist demands.

As for the **capital expenditure**, the increased government spending in the last few years hasn’t resulted in the desired results. It is likely to result in “**crowding out**” of the private sector borrowings. It will be prudent to not increase the **government capital expenditure allocations** for 2023-24 beyond the current year’s level.

The government should refrain from setting an **unrealistic target for divestment revenue receipts**.

The government shouldn’t depend on **divestment proceeds** to meet its revenue requirements. The government needs to prioritise **corporate governance improvements** in the public sector enterprises.

The Budget should announce the government’s plan to improve the **IBC’s efficacy**.

The government should not provide **tariff duty protection** to the various sectors of domestic industry without solid reasoning. Sincere efforts are needed to bring to conclude **crucial free trade agreements**, which have been under negotiations for several years.

The **capital gains tax regime** needs an overhaul. During the last few years, the capital gains tax rates have been frequently changed in an ad hoc manner. There is a need to **simplify and rationalise the existing capital gains tax framework**.

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[58. Internet blues for media](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Internet blues for media**” published in **Business Standard** on **20th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – IT and Computer

Relevance: reasons behind declining internet users in India

News: There has been a decrease in the use of the internet by the people. This article discusses the reasons behind low consumption of the internet by Indians.

What is the reason behind low use of the internet in India?

The **prices of smartphones have gone up** due to the chip shortage in the market and due to the supply constraints.

As per the **IDC data**, the Indian smartphone market declined 10 per cent year-on-year in the third quarter of 2022. This was the lowest third-quarter figure since 2019.

The prices of smartphones have also **affected the internet growth in India** because a smartphone is the first way into the internet and a primary device to go online.

What will be the effect of low use of the internet in India?

It will have **ripple effects** and its effects will be felt across sectors, including education and banking.

It will also **affect online advertising** because if fewer people will be online there will be fewer views on the advertisement which will bring uncertainty for both advertisers and digital businesses.

Further, the **number of people using broadband has remained at the same level** for two years now.

As per the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (**TRAI**) data, internet growth fell down by 4 percent in 2021 and by June 2022 the growth in internet subscribers was less than 1 per cent compared to the same quarter in 2021.

What is the way ahead?

According to the telecom analysts, the chip capacity will improve in the second half of 2023. This will ease the demand-supply situation making chips accessible for entry-level smartphones.

Hence, the price of smartphones will fall with more people getting access to phones and the internet.

[59. Disruptive change in education could help us tackle joblessness](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Disruptive change in education could help us tackle joblessness**” published in the **Livemint** on **20th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 and GS 3 – Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education and Employment.

Relevance: About the education needs and India’s labour market.

News: Recent estimates suggest that India will need to create about 200 million jobs in the next decade to fully absorb the backlog of unemployment (and underemployment), i.e., about an additional 20 million jobs per year.

What are the key concerns of India’s labour market?

According to the author, the employment challenge in India is a man-made problem attributable to two types of policy distortions. **a)** Industrial regulation and **b)** Education policy.

Industrial regulation causes: **1)** Slow growth of employment, **2)** Low employment intensity of GDP growth and **3)** Low labour force participation rate, especially among women.

What are the education policy-related causes of India's employment challenge?

1) Only a small fraction of the Indian workforce has the educational foundation required for highly skilled, high-productivity jobs, **2)** The education levels of most Indian workers enable them to acquire only low skills suitable for low-productivity jobs, **3)** Barely 5% of the workforce have any skill training and only 2% have any formal skill certificate as compared to over 70% in advanced European countries like the UK or Germany and as much as 80% in East Asian countries like Japan or South Korea, **4)** India's long-standing neglect of primary and secondary education has limited the access to quality basic education, **5)** The share of public expenditure on education in India, around 14%, is about the same as the Asian-country average. But its allocation has a sharp bias. For instance, Universal primary education (>90% net primary enrolment) was only achieved in India during the past decade but most countries in East and Southeast Asia had already achieved this goal over 50 years ago. Further, the [Annual State of Education \(Rural\) reports \(ASER\)](#) show that learning outcomes still remain abysmal.

What needs to be done in education to improve India's labour market?

Education is primarily a state subject. Unlike welfare schemes and other popular issues with immediate poll pay-offs, education programmes take time to show results. But many of such required changes are embodied in the [National Education Policy \(NEP\) 2020](#).

Some states have begun showcasing their performance on education and other public goods, and voters have been rewarding them. Such rewards will force all the state governments to focus on the service-delivery performance of education.

60. Chexit, in parts: Reshoring, friend-shoring and billions of dollars in sops

Source– The post is based on the article “**Chexit, in parts: Reshoring, friend-shoring and billions of dollars in sops**” published in the **Business Standard** on **21th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance– Issues related to global economy

News– The article explains the shift of numerous factories and supply-chain dependence away from China.

China is facing **weakening growth**, following a **decade-long, progressive slowdown**

What are the steps taken by East Asian countries to relocate their business away from China?

Japan is paying its firms to move their factories from China. It has also introduced a **new economic security law** covering 14 sectors deemed to be part of **societal infrastructure**.

South Korea and Taiwan have **comparable programmes** that target mainly China.

So, **Asia's three most industrialised countries** are **offering incentives** to move their companies out of China and back to their home base.

What are the recent examples of companies relocating their business away from China?

Some 250 Japanese companies are reported to have left China in recent years. The trend is accelerating. It is not limited to Japanese companies.

According to one report, 135 companies moved out of China just last year and relocated plants making semiconductors, motor vehicles, appliances, and clothing. **Sony** has partly re-located its smartphone production to Thailand.

South Korean companies too have been **not just re-shoring but “friend-shoring”** as well. **Samsung** has opted for Vietnam. **Malaysia** has benefited from 32 projects relocated from China.

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What is the reason behind relocating firms from China?

China's aggressive behaviour is compelling the firms to look for alternate options. A **visa ban** has hit both Japan and South Korea. South Korea's Lotte retail chain, Sweden's Ericsson, and Australian wine-makers have been impacted by Chinese policies.

Global firms see **heightened political risk**. They are worried about **discrimination, rising production costs, stricter environmental rules, and of course disrupted supplies**.

Are global firms abandoning China as a production base or as a market?

Foreign direct investment into China **actually increased** in 2022. Germany's BASF, for instance, is relocating into China.

The Financial Times report shows how interlocked the **Apple production network** is with the Chinese ecosystem. Countries like the US and India that have tried to restrict imports from China have only seen their China trade deficits grow.

What is the scenario of India?

India's current **policy thrust like production-linked incentives, capital subsidies** is very much in line with the East Asian.

India ranked seventh on a 2021 **UN list for foreign investment**. But, it is not the default alternative to China for most global companies.

India must **integrate more with East Asia** by getting into **regional trade arrangements**, lowering its **tariff walls**, and improving the **quality of its workforce**.

[61. 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 Ujjwala 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.

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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.

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.

62. 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**.

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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.

Russians 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.

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.

63. 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.

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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 **siloe 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.

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

[64. 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.

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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.

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.

[65. 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.

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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.

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.

66. [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**

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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.

67. 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.

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

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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**.

68. [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**.

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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.

69. [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.

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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.

70. [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.

71. [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.

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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.

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.

72. [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.

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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**.

73. [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.

74. [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.

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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.

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**.

75. 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.

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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.

76. [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.

77. [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.

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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**. 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.