



9 PM

Compilation

13th to 19th February 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. [Lithium reserves: Our J&K find could put India on the lithium map](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Our J&K find could put India on the lithium map**” published in the **Livemint** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian sub-continent).

Relevance: About Lithium reserves.

News: Recently, the Geological Survey of India has for the first time discovered Lithium reserves in the Salal-Haimana area of Reasi District of Jammu & Kashmir(UT).

About the Lithium reserves around the globe

According to the US Geological Survey, the world has 98 million tonnes of Lithium reserves. Of that, half of it is in **South America’s ‘lithium triangle’** of Bolivia, Chile and Argentina. Apart from that, the US, Australia and China also have some Lithium reserves.

The recent Lithium discovery in Jammu & Kashmir is about 5.9 million tonnes which is about 5.5% of the world’s total Lithium reserves.

What is Lithium?

Read here: [Facts about Lithium](#)

What are the applications of Lithium?

Read here: [Uses of Lithium](#)

What is the importance of Lithium reserves in India?

Read here: [Geological Survey of India Finds Lithium and Gold Deposits](#)

Reduce Chinese dominance: China dominates the lithium supply chain. China has agreements with South American suppliers, and it is refining **about two-thirds of the world’s lithium cell** assembly.

What is the importance of Lithium reserves?

Reducing global warming: The aim of carbon neutrality has begun to set economic terms amid global trade wars and outright de-globalization.

Ability to pack energy: Lithium’s lightness and ability to pack in energy make it a good pick for vehicles and devices that run on rechargeable batteries since lithium ions can store and release electricity without adding much body weight.

Hence, according to McKinsey report, annual demand for lithium could reach 3-4 million tonnes by 2030 (about five times the usage estimate of 2022).

The discovery of reserves in India relieves us of a key import dependency and helps to electrify Indian traffic faster.

2. [Hill or city, urban planning cannot be an afterthought](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Hill or city, urban planning cannot be an afterthought**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Urbanisation. GS3- Disaster management

Relevance– Urban planning for disaster resilience

News– Recently, land subsidence took place in Joshimath due to heavy pressure on land and water.

What are the issues faced by urban areas?

Land use planning– Land subsidence incidents in hilly urban India are becoming increasingly common. About 12.6% of India’s land area is estimated to be prone to landslides, especially in Sikkim, West Bengal.

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According to the **National Institute of Disaster Management**, **Urban policy** is making this worse.

Construction in such a landscape is often driven by **building bye-laws** that ignore **local geological and environmental factors**.

Land use planning in India's Himalayan towns and the Western Ghats is often ill-conceived. It adds to slope instability. As a result, landslide vulnerability has risen. It has been made worse by tunnelling construction that is weakening rock formations.

Flood risks- Planned townships are approved, with a distinct lack of concerns for **natural hazards**. Townships are built on **river floodplains**.

In Delhi, an estimated 9,350 households live in the Yamuna floodplains. The **UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report** of March 2022 has highlighted the risk Kolkata faces due to a rise in sea levels.

The combination of **poor urban planning and climate change** will mean that many of India's cities could face devastating flooding.

What is the way forward to improve the resilience of urban areas?

Acquiring credible data is the first step toward **enhancing urban resilience** with regard to land subsidence. The overall landslide risk needs to be mapped at the granular level.

The Geological Survey of India has conducted a **national mapping exercise**. Urban policymakers need to take this further, with additional detail and localisation.

Areas with high landslide risk should not be allowed to expand large infrastructure. There is a need to **reduce human interventions and adhere to carrying capacity**.

Flood-proofing India's cities will require multiple measures. Urban planners will have to step back from filling up water bodies, canals and drains.

The focus should be on **enhancing sewerage and stormwater drain networks**. Existing sewerage networks need to be reworked and expanded to enable wastewater drainage in low-lying urban geographies.

Rivers that overflow need to be **desilted regularly** along with a **push for coastal walls** in areas at risk from sea rise.

Greater spending on **flood-resilient architecture** like river embankments, flood shelters in coastal

areas and flood warning systems are necessary.

There is a need to protect **"blue infra" areas**. Examples are places that act as natural sponges for absorbing surface runoff, allowing groundwater to be recharged.

As rainfall patterns and intensity change, urban authorities will need to **invest in simulation capacity** to determine flooding hotspots and flood risk maps.

[3. Hindi in the world: In the era of cultural-flattening, India must strengthen its linguistic traditions](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **"Hindi in the world: In the era of cultural-flattening, India must strengthen its linguistic traditions"** published in **The Indian Express** on **15th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Indian culture

Relevance- Issues related to languages

News- Fiji is hosting the 12th World Hindi Conference between February 15 and 17.

What is the status of Hindi in the UN?

India has **achieved limited progress** at the United Nations regarding Hindi. The UN has now made a provision to provide all the important messages and press releases in Hindi.

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However, the government is making all efforts to ensure a **rightful place for Hindi** at the UN.

What are the challenges before Hindi and other languages?

Speaking in Hindi or regional languages is **considered inferior** in India, due to the burden of colonialism. The ability to converse in English has become a **status symbol**.

Some politicians indulge in **linguistic chauvinism**. But, the family members of such politicians are schooled in English medium.

How can Indian languages have a global presence?

Indian languages need to be first **respected in their motherland**.

Every language **keeps evolving**. No language can continue to grow without accommodating some more meaningful terms from sister languages. However, there should not be **mindless adulterations**.

Hindi needs to be saved from the **onslaught of English** and other Indian languages from English and Hindi. Hindi-speaking people should ensure **respect and recognition** for all other Indian languages. Usage is the lifeblood of any language.

There is a need for **hand-holding between Indian languages**. **Quality translations** from Indian languages to other Indian and world languages are necessary. It is time to **evolve a mechanism** for translating award-winning literary works in Indian languages into all UN languages.

Engineering and medical education in Hindi is now a reality. If other Indian languages follow suit, they could evolve as **languages of the knowledge era**. **New concepts, new technologies and new knowledge-creation** demand **new coinages and new terms**.

In a globalised world, Hindi also needs to engage with other foreign languages, especially in the neighbourhood.

Understanding our very own **cultural moorings, taking legitimate pride in our history and our heritage** is the prerequisite for the sustenance of languages. In that sense, Hindi and other Indian languages have to further **strengthen their roots and then expand their horizons**.

4. [Urbanisation and urban dynamics](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Urbanisation and urban dynamics**” published in **Business Standard** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Urbanization

Relevance: Urbanization and Urban dynamics

News: The article discusses about urbanization and urban dynamics. It also tells how these two are interrelated.

What are urbanisation and urban dynamics?

Urbanisation is not only a shift of population from the countryside to urban areas but it is a process that influences and defines a place’s cultural beauty.

For example, Paris is the world’s fashion capital.

Therefore, Paris’s transformation as a fashion capital and its process of urbanization is associated with the urbanization of foreign designers that further influenced the labour relations as well as the industrialisation processes.

Urban dynamics can be defined as the factors that comprise an urban environment that includes opportunities and threats.

It is the understanding that social, cultural and economic factors not only bring together a city, but also the inherent being of that city.

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How do urbanisation and urban dynamics influence the city and how are they both inter-related?

Changes brought by urbanisation are beneficial to businesses, lead to the improvement of public services, improve technology and infrastructure, and help in the creation of new ideas. However, **urbanisation also leads to overcrowding**, resource extinction, pollution and land degradation.

On the other hand, **urban dynamics is related to the interaction** of spatial geography with the environment and with human behaviour.

Moreover, a city is viewed as an economic landscape which tends to bring urbanization, but the same city also has urban dynamics such as class differences.

Therefore, urbanisation has always been reflected in its urban dynamics and the relationship between urbanisation and urban dynamics is very cohesive and interactive.

Hence, any change in urbanisation will also see the transformation of the urban dynamics of the city.

General Studies Paper – 2

General Studies - 2

1. [The demand for a Greater Tipraland by the TIPRA Motha](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The demand for a Greater Tipraland by the TIPRA Motha**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: Demand for new statehood

News: The Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance (TIPRA) Motha has come up with the demand for a Greater Tipraland in the current election of Tripura.

What is Greater Tipraland and what are the demands of TIPRA?

The party released its Vision Document in which it said that it was committed in seeking a permanent solution for the rights of the indigenous people of Tripura as per the Constitution of India.

The **Greater Tipraland would be carved out** as a new State for the 19 indigenous tribes of Tripura under **Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution**.

This new state would go beyond the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (**TTAADC**) areas and include other villages where the **Tiprasa** (indigenous people of Tripura) reside in large numbers.

The party would also set up task forces to connect with the Tiprasa living in other regions of the country and the world to help them with their linguistic, cultural, social, and economic development.

What is the genesis of this demand?

The demand for Greater Tipraland has emerged from the demand for **Tipraland** put forth by the Indigenous People’s Front of Tripura (**IPFT**) in 2009.

The demand for Tipraland was to carve out a separate State for the tribal population of Tripura from the TTAADC areas.

Whereas, the demand for **Greater Tipraland goes beyond the TTAADC areas** and includes at least 36 more villages where the tribal population is in the range of 20% to 36%. This **also includes Muslims and Hindu population** living in those regions.

Moreover, the demand for a separate statehood escalated after the **refugees from East Pakistan** came in Tripura between 1950 and 1952.

The conflict between the tribals and non-tribals escalated in 1980 and it took the shape of **armed insurgency**. However, after an agreement between the government and tribal group the matter was settled up.

Hence, from those time there has been conflict between the two and the demand for autonomous region has been emerging.

What is the implication of this demand on Tripura?

The demand for Greater Tipraland put forth by TIPRA has further **deteriorated the relation between tribals and non-tribals living in the state**.

2. [Why the outrage at a minor domestic worker’s abuse is unlikely to change things](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**Why the outrage at a minor domestic worker’s abuse is unlikely to change things**” published in **The Indian Express** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance- Issues related to child labor

News- Recently, inhuman treatment was experienced by a minor live-in worker at her employer’s home in Gurgaon.

What is Domestic work?

According to **ILO**, domestic work refers to **housework** such as sweeping, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, cooking, caring for children and such other work which is carried out for an employer for remuneration.

What are the problems faced Domestic workers?

They face **multiple forms of violence**. It includes physical abuse, intimidation, threats, bullying, sexual assault, harassment, being provided poor-quality food and a lack of privacy.

What are the laws available in India to protect the Minor from Domestic Abuse?

The **Factories Act of 1948** sets limits on working hours for children aged 6 to 14. It Requires **parental permission** for any work over 8 hours a day.

The **Employment of Children (Prohibition) Act of 1973** sets similar restrictions on ages 9 to 14. It makes it illegal to employ a child in a **hazardous or dangerous occupation**.

The **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 1986** provides special protections for children below the age of 18 who have been involved in criminal activity.

3. [Moving With Times – SC’s flexible approach to interpreting the Constitution has enhanced its relevance to governance](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Moving With Times – SC’s flexible approach to interpreting the Constitution has enhanced its relevance to governance**” published in **The Times of India** on **13th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Constitution as a living document.

News: Recently, the Supreme Court highlighted the universal debate on how a country’s Constitution should be interpreted.

About the Case recognising Constitution as a living document

There are two types of interpretations of the Constitution. **a)** One who believes in **prism of originalism**, a theory which advocates sticking to an interpretation of the Constitution’s drafters, and **b)** One who believes in seeing the **constitution as a living document** where interpretation adapts to changes in society.

The Supreme Court recently referred the writ petition to a larger bench which involves the **right of a religious community to excommunicate followers**.

While referring to it, the court implied the constitution as a living constitution. Such as **a)** The idea of freedom is not static, **b)** Judicial interpretation needs to keep pace with changing social mores.

How Supreme Court accepted the Constitution as a living document?

The first draft of the Constitution might not be conceptualized in every scenario. The gaps have been interpreted in light of social and economic changes.

Many landmark verdicts reflect underlying changes in society and interpreted the constitution as a living document. Four key judgments include **a)** **Kesavananda Bharati case** in 1973 led to the establishment of the basic structure doctrine. It ensured that a parliamentary majority would not lead to constitutional amendments that could undermine its essence, **b)** **Vishaka case** led the court to frame guidelines to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. In this, the court was way ahead of the legislature in responding to a big social and economic change, **c)** The private agreements override government control over natural resources. But in 2010, the court allowed the state to continue to exercise its grip on key areas of economic activity, and **d)** In 2017, in a unanimous verdict the court held the right to privacy as fundamental.

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Overall, the court allowed a gradual change in the way constitutional principles are understood and applied by both the legislature and executive. In India, a flexible approach to interpretation has gradually allowed individual rights to come to the fore.

4. [Competition law amendments: Of penalties and misses](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Competition law amendments: Of penalties and misses**” published in **Live Mint** on **14th February 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Governance**

Relevance: **proposed amendments in Competition Amendment Bill 2023**

News: The government has come up with the proposed amendments to India’s competition law and is set to introduce the **Competition Amendment Bill (2023)** in Parliament.

What are the proposed amendments in the bill and what are the associated concerns?

Change in the imposition of penalties: The bill proposes that the Competition Commission of India (CCI) can now impose penalties **up to 10% of the total global turnover of enterprises** which are found to have contravened the competition law.

Currently, penalties are calculated **as a percentage of only relevant turnover in India**, which excludes sales from products which have no relation to the contravention.

Further, the current law uses the word ‘**turnover**’ in the penalty provision and does not specify if it is ‘total’ or ‘relevant’.

However, in 2017, the **Supreme Court** had clarified that turnover for imposing penalty should mean **relevant turnover**.

The court has also held that when the contravention involves one product, there is no need for including other products for imposing a penalty.

The government **has also retained a provision that required the CCI** to come out with regulations to ‘determine’ the turnover to be considered for penalties.

Hence, the concern with global turnover for calculating penalties is that **it might impose heavy penalties on big multinational companies**.

Expansion of the scope of liability of cartel facilitators: The amendment has proposed to **codify the liability of cartel facilitators which ‘actively participate’ in the advancement of a cartel**.

However, the parliamentary panel recommended that the **scope of this proposal must be limited** and the **CCI must first prove** that a facilitator intended to actively participate in a cartel.

But, the 2023 Bill has expanded its scope by **removing the word ‘active’**. Hence, this might have a negative impact on those entities which may not have in fact participated, but may have only intended to participate in a cartel.

Therefore, a broad provision like this **raises over-enforcement risks** and may expose certain entities to undue hardship.

What is another concern with the Bill?

The bill has **excluded cartels from the proposed settlement regime** because there already exists a leniency regime for them.

However, **leniency and settlement regimes are designed to secure efficiencies** at different stages of a CCI inquiry, and they co-exist in other countries as well. Therefore, the exclusion of cartel settlements seems like a missed opportunity.

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5. [House rules and the weapon of expunction](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**House rules and the weapon of expunction**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Parliament and state legislatures- Conduct of business

Relevance– Rules and procedures of Parliament

News– Recently, portions of the speeches made by some Opposition politicians in Parliament were expunged.

What are some facts about the motion of thanks by the President?

This is **customary practice**. The **Constitution does not provide** for any such motion, except direct that each House shall discuss the matters contained in the address. This is a practice adopted from the British Parliament.

When such a motion is discussed, MPs are generally permitted to speak on any matter of importance. Speeches are **generally political** and the Chair never insists on relevance.

MPs have the right to critically scrutinise the performance of the government.

Under the Rules of the House, the Prime Minister replies to the debate in both Houses.

What are rules governing allegations against ministers and MPs in Parliament?

Article 105 of the Constitution confers on members, **freedom of speech** in the House and immunity from interference by the court for anything said in the House.

Freedom of speech in the House is the **most important privilege** of a Member of Parliament. It is subject only to the other provisions of the Constitution relating to the running of the House and the House Rules.

Rule 380 of the Rules of procedure of the Lok Sabha and Rule 261 of the Rules of the Rajya Sabha give the power to the presiding officers of these Houses to expunge any words used in the debate which are defamatory, unparliamentary, undignified or indecent.

Once Expunged they do not remain on record. If anyone publishes them thereafter, they will be liable for breach of privilege of the House.

Rule 353 of the Lok Sabha regulates the procedure if MP make an allegation against a fellow MP or an outsider. Under this Rule, the MP is required to give “**adequate advance notice**” to the Speaker as well as the Minister concerned.

On receipt of advance notice under Rule 353, the Minister concerned will **conduct an inquiry** into the allegation and come up with the facts. allegation which necessitates advance notice should be of a **defamatory or incriminatory nature**.

The rule does not apply to an allegation against a Minister in the government because the Council of Ministers is accountable to Parliament.

However, a Member of Parliament needs to **follow a certain procedure** while making an allegation against a Minister. Such a procedure has been laid down by Speakers in the past. Making an allegation against a Minister or the Prime Minister is considered to be a serious matter. Therefore, MP who makes an imputation against a Minister of the government should be sure about the **factual basis of the allegation**, and he must take responsibility for it.

A careful reading of the Rules of the House reveals that expunction can be done only when the allegations mentioned are of **defamatory or incriminatory character**.

Under Section 499 of the Indian Penal Code, any statement with respect to the conduct of a public servant in the discharge of his public function or his character is not defamation. If such a statement is made in the House against a Minister who is a public servant, it does not come within the ‘**mischief**’ of **Rule 353 or Rule 380**.

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6. [Constitutional oath is not a mere formality](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Constitutional oath is not a mere formality**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance– Appointment of judges

News– Recently, the appointment of Justice Gowri as SC judge has been in controversy due to hate speech given by her in the past

What is the constitution?

It is the **basic law** that lays the foundation for the governance of a country.

It lays down **broad policy and directives** for the authorities and institutions tasked with its implementation.

What is an oath by a judge of a High Court under Schedule III of the Constitution?

It requires a declaration of **allegiance to the Constitution** and performance of duties “**without fear or favour, affection or ill-will**”.

The appointee must also declare that she will “**uphold**” the **Constitution and the laws**.

What is the importance of oaths declared by higher courts in various cases?

SC in N. Kannadasan v. Ajoy Khose (2009) case declared that eligibility of a judge of a High Court should not be construed in a **pedantic manner**.

An additional judge of the High Court, who was not appointed as a permanent judge due to allegations of lack of probity, was later recommended by the then Chief Justice of the Madras High Court for appointment as president of the State Consumer Commission.

SC held that a person who lacked the **qualities necessary to adhere to the oath of office** of a the judge was ineligible for appointment to any judicial office.

Madras High Court in the case of K.S. Haja Shareef (1983) held that Inability to adhere to the The Constitution as per the oath prescribed will be **ground for disqualification**. The person accepted appointment as Honorary Consul General of Turkey at Madras.

Why does the appointment of Justice raise important questions?

To limit ‘eligibility’ for appointment of a High Court judge to a minimum of 10 years of legal practice prescribed in **Article 217(2)** makes a mockery of the integrity and independence of the Judiciary.

Supreme Court in **S.P. Gupta v. Union of India (1981)** directed the Government and the Chief Justice of India (CJI) to disclose all the materials.

It held that their constitutional duty demanded such scrutiny through **judicial review**. If on scrutiny it was found that all the materials were not before the CJI, the selection process is defective and invalid.

CJI expressed in case related to appointment of Justice Victoria Gowri that materials now brought before the collegium were not available earlier. It reveals the **fault lines between judiciary and executive**.

7. [Honour of office: On new Governors of States appointed by the Centre](#)

Source: The post is based on the article

“**Honour of office: On new Governors of States appointed by the Centre**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th February 2023**.

“**The Express View on the governors’ reshuffle: Raj Bhavan Dharma**” published in the **Indian Express** on **14th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the Office of Governor.

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News: Recently, Government appointed 6 new governors, and reshuffles 7 others. A retired Supreme Court judge and two Army officers were also appointed as Governors.

What are the questions surrounding the office of Governor?

Over the decades the appointments of Governors have come under scrutiny because **a) Governors in most Opposition-ruled states are seen to be locked in conflict** with the respective state governments, **b) Governors have sought to play a political role in States.** For instance, Governor's recent political involvement in States such as Jharkhand, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, **c) The overreach of Governors has become a serious question in Centre-State relations and democracy** in general.

Must read: [Issues Related to the Office of Governor – Explained, pointwise](#)

About the Office of Governor

The institution of the Governor is a **legacy of the British imperial governance structure.** The legitimacy of a nominated Governor in a democracy was highly debated in the Constituent Assembly, but it was carried on into the new republic nevertheless.

The Governor must **act as a dynamic link between the Centre and the State.** The Constitution makers were very clear that the posts must remain ornamental, except in narrowly defined situations in which governors were allowed discretion in decision-making.

In short, the governor is the representative of the Union in the state. But that does not mean that the Governor's office is a parallel power and can usurp the authority of the elected government in the State.

What should be done to ensure the constitutional functioning of the Office of Governor?

a) The balance of powers between the Raj Bhavan and the elected government in the state should be respected, **b) The Centre must allow enough room for the Raj Bhavan to function:** The independence and autonomy of the office should not be compromised, **c) The new governor's should refuse to lure local politics, maintain the dignity of their office and uphold the federal spirit** in the Constitution, and **d) The Centre should refrain from making Governor's office as a post-retirement possibility** for those who are required to stay aloof from partisan politics in their current roles. As it lowers the dignity of the offices that they leave behind and what they go on to occupy.

Overall, the courts have in the past drawn the line on the powers of governors and raised the bar on the misuse of **Article 356** to dismiss state governments. Hence, it is best for governors to follow the rule book and continue as custodians of Constitutional values rather than seek a political profile.

8. [Japan's evolving relations with the Global South](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Japan's evolving relations with the Global South”** published in **The Indian Express** on **15th February 2023.**

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Changing foreign policy priorities of the countries

News– Japan is now emphasising on the Global South amidst a major transformation of its foreign and security policies under Kishida's leadership.

How has Japan shown impressive leadership in the world of strategic ideas in recent times?

Japan has constructed and popularised the **Indo-Pacific construct** over the last decade and more.

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Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe first articulated the **idea of the Indo-Pacific** in an address to the Indian Parliament in August 2007. He called for a **coalition of Asian democracies** that eventually took the form of the **Quadrilateral forum**.

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has now taken the initiative to raise the **Global South to the top of the G7 agenda**.

In a major policy speech in Washington last month, Japan's PM Kishida cautioned other G7 countries on the dangers of **neglecting the Global South**. Kishida is conscious that the West has neglected **political engagement with the Global South** in recent decades.

Kishida is firm in his conviction that the G7 can't "**impose its values**" on the **Global South**. Kishida has told his G7 partners that we need to be **more committed to our values**. There is a need to have a firm understanding of **historical and cultural backgrounds of the global south**. Japan now wants the G7 to reconnect with the Global South in more fundamental ways. Kishida believes that **greater cooperation between the G7 and the developing countries** is also critical for addressing the current **global challenges**.

What are the major changes in foreign and security policies of Japan under Kishida's leadership?

Kishida is among the few leaders in Asia who has clearly articulated the **implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine** a year ago this month. If unilateral change of the status quo by force is unchallenged, it will happen elsewhere in the world, including Asia.

Kishida has announced **sweeping reform in Japan's defence policy**. This involved doubling the **defence spending to 2% of the GDP** over the next 5 years, building a **large missile force, boosting cybersecurity capabilities, and taking larger responsibilities for regional security and capacity building in the Indo-Pacific**.

Japan has adopted **new realist diplomacy**. Japan now recognises the **essential relationship between diplomacy and defence**.

How is Kishida's new approach beneficial from the Indian perspective?

Kishida's new approach provides the basis for **more substantive and wider collaboration between Delhi and Tokyo** in the developing regions of the world.

India should welcome Kishida's new interest in the Global South. Japan's **initiatives on the Indo-Pacific and the Quad** have broken the misperception of Asia as being **merely Sino-centric**.

The **India-Japan partnership on the Global South** might help overcome the **traditional divides between East and West as well as North and South**.

9. [Shaping a more disabled-friendly digital ecosystem](#)

Source– The post is based on the article "**Shaping a more disabled-friendly digital ecosystem**" published in **The Hindu** on **15th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance– Issues related to persons with disability

News– The article explains the issue of accessibility of digital space for persons with disabilities.

What are some statistics related to people with disabilities?

As per estimation in Census 2011, 2.21% of India's population is disabled. This is a **gross underestimation**.

According to the **World Health Organization**, about 16% of the global population is disabled. If it is applied to the Indian context, there are at least 192 million disabled people.

India had 750 million Internet/smartphone users in 2020. Applying the 16% figure here, means roughly 12 crore Internet users with disabilities.

What is the status of accessibility of digital space?

A report **evaluates the accessibility** of 10 of the most widely used apps in India, across five sectors. These sectors were chosen based on broad stakeholder consultation with people with disabilities.

Based on the number of violations, the **level of accessibility** of the apps was categorised as “**high**”, “**medium**” and “**low**”. The report found that four apps ranked low, five were in the medium category.

What is the way forward to improve the accessibility of digital space?

There is a need to work with these service providers. They need help to **design practices and processes** that will not only **improve app accessibility** but also **educate their stakeholders** about accessibility and people with disabilities.

This will also help **change attitudes of the business community around disability** in the country. They will move away from a **charity approach to a rights-based and investment outlook**.

Technology is used to automate a large number of **accessibility tests**, and combine that with **in-depth manual testing** to provide comprehensive accessibility feedback to developers.

AI can help to further **automate the accessibility testing process**. Feedback from users with disabilities can now be analysed at scale to provide **actionable insights** to developers and companies.

Everything digital must be **accessible to everyone**. This starts with incorporating the **principles of accessibility and inclusive design** into every digital offering from inception.

India needs to be **truly accessible** for all people with disabilities. Organisations, companies, civil society, the government and the courts must work upon it.

10. Ladakh, a fragile region, needs autonomy

Source– The post is based on the article “**Ladakh, a fragile region, needs autonomy**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Devolution of power and finances up to local level

Relevance– Regional political issues

News– The residents of Ladakh are agitating to pursue their demand for special constitutional Status.

What is the reason behind the grievances of people in Ladakh?

Political status– Their real need for **relatively free and autonomous functioning and substantial local employment generation** is still not fulfilled.

For 1,000 years, Ladakh was an **independent kingdom** before being integrated into Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The memory of this long history has not been erased. It is now being ruled from New Delhi.

Since 1995, Ladakh has had an AHDC with the aim of enabling **locally determined development**. However, decision-making was mostly dominated by Srinagar and Delhi.

In 2019, the Indian government had announced that Ladakh would get **special constitutional status providing it autonomy**.

Before the **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council** election, **Sixth Schedule status** was promised to the region, similar to some parts of north-east India. This promise is yet to be fulfilled.

Developmental model– Ladakh is a **sensitive ecosystem**. Cultures and livelihoods are sensitive to the **fragility of ecosystems** that cannot bear heavy human activity.

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High-altitude pastoralism, agriculture, and trade have been the mainstays of Ladakhi economy and society for centuries. Administrators appointed from Delhi do not comprehend the need of such a landscape.

Ladakh is already groaning under infrastructure development, intense armed forces presence, and excessive tourism.

Since Ladakh became a UT, there is even more focus on an **exploitative 'development' path**. There is enormous commercial interest for mining, tourism, hydropower, and other natural resources.

Ladakh already faces serious problems of **landslides, erosion, solid waste and effluents, disturbance to wildlife, and cordoning of common lands** for development projects.

What is the way forward to fulfil the demand of Ladakhi people?

There are opportunities for Ladakh and Delhi to work together. A Hill Council decision for Ladakh agriculture to become **fully organic** could be backed by the Central government. Communities could be assisted to **claim and operationalise collective rights** over grasslands using the Forest Rights Act.

Tourism could be fully oriented towards **community-run, ecologically sensitive visitation**.

A constitutional status that enables **locally determined pathways**, driven by a sensitive local population is the need of the day.

[11. More Minnus, Draupadis – Every tribal success story is a reminder how much govts need to do for genuine Adivasi empowerment](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**More Minnus, Draupadis – Every tribal success story is a reminder how much govts need to do for genuine Adivasi empowerment**” published in **The Times of India** on **15th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice

Relevance: concerns associated with tribals in India

News: Minnu Mani, a tribal girl from the Kurichiya tribe in Kerala has secured a contract in the Women's Premier League auction.

This is an effort towards empowering the tribal communities in India, however, there are also problems associated with the tribal communities.

What are the concerns associated with tribals in India?

Declining conditions: As per the **Tribal Development Report 2022**, tribes constitute 8.6% of the population.

Despite a lower share, **their condition is worse than others** when it comes to access to sanitation, drinking water, education and proper nutrition.

The report also says that **tribal communities have been pushed away from the fertile lands which has affected their livelihoods**. Of the total Scheduled Tribe districts in the country, 90% are in either forested or hilly or dry areas.

Concerns with amendments to Forest Conservation Rules: Tribals have protested against the amendments made in the Forest Conservation Rules last year.

They say that the **amendments take away the rights of tribes and forest dwellers** over forest resources provided by the Forest Rights Act, 2009.

Moreover, these amendments give an advantage to businesses to easily obtain forest land for commercial purposes. Thus, affecting the tribal welfare.

Political Issues: Tribals have been mostly used for political purposes such as to get votes while their conditions have not been improved.

12. [Fossil and time: On the draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics bill](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Fossil and time: On the draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics bill**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics bill.

News: Recently, the Ministry of Mines has introduced a Draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics (Preservation and Maintenance) Bill, 2022. The bill provides more powers to the [Geological Survey of India\(GSI\)](#).

About the Draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics bill

Must read: [Draft Bill vests powers entirely in Geological Survey of India, say expert](#)

What are Geo-Heritage sites?

Read here: [Geological Heritage Sites](#)

What is the need for the draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics bill?

There are numerous initiatives to preserve cultural history and man-made artefacts from archaeology. But, there has been limited effort to preserve and communicate the natural ‘geo-history’ rock formations, sediment and fossil.

For decades, researchers have been warning that India’s neglect of ‘geo-history’ will lead to an erasure of India’s geo history from the public mind and destruction as well as the appropriation of this natural wealth. The bill aimed at protecting the geo-history of India.

What are the challenges associated with the draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics bill?

–Absolute vesting of powers in the GSI alone may impede palaeontological research.

–Given the premium for land and India’s economic needs, there will be conflict over questions of preservation and livelihood.

What should be done to make the draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics bill comprehensive?

Need an inclusive body: A more inclusive body, on the lines of a National Geoheritage Authority, has to be created and vested with powers.

Proper framing of rules: The legislation will act as a ring fence. Hence, the government should not use it as a tool for suppressing independent investigation.

13. [Post-retirement appointments: a danger to judicial independence](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Post-retirement appointments: a danger to judicial independence**” published in **The Hindu** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance– Appointment of judges

News– Justice S. Abdul Nazeer has been appointed Governor of Andhra Pradesh within a month of retiring from the Supreme Court of India.

Since 2014, he is the **third Supreme Court judge** who has received a **high-profile political appointment** soon after retirement.

Why are judges given political appointments after retirement?

This may be a signal to judges that they will be **suitably awarded** if they give decisions favouring the government.

The government can influence the judiciary through political appointments. Earlier governments with majoritarian governments have also done it. They want to consolidate their power.

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What is the way forward for judges taking post-retirement benefits?

The larger objective for any **reasonable executive** should be to ensure the **independence of the other arms of the governing mechanism**.

Judges should show **moral responsibility and character**. Judges must recognise that handouts from the government, in the form of such political appointments are not one-way. It is based on a **give-and-take approach**.

The Indian judiciary must **distinguish between political favours and other post-retirement employment opportunities**.

There needs to be a **demarcation between roles** where the presence of judicial authority is valuable and even necessary, such as tribunal and where it is not.

Ideally, the judicial community should take a concerted decision on this. They should agree that judges should not take up any appointments upon retirement stemming from **political patronage**.

A cooling period of about two years should be considered a mandatory minimum before a judge agrees to take on any post-retirement adjudicatory role.

14. India's Sri Lankan refugees need fair consideration

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's Sri Lankan refugees need fair consideration**” published in **The Hindu** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Issues related to refugees

News– The article explains the issues of Tamil refugees in India

What is the status of Tamil refugees and the policy priorities of the Indian government for them?

The **Ministry of Home Affairs in its 2021-2022 Annual Report** states that **3,04,269 Sri Lankan refugees** entered India between July 1983 and August 2012.

In India, 58,648 refugees are residing in 108 camps in Tamil Nadu while 54 are in Odisha.

Another 34,135 refugees registered with Tamil Nadu authorities reside outside camps.

They were provided **relief including shelter, subsidised ration, educational assistance, medical care and cash allowances**.

The **objective of the Government** of India remains the **repatriation of refugees** to Sri Lanka. 99,469 refugees were repatriated to Sri Lanka up to March 1995 and no organised repatriation was done thereafter.

What were the steps taken by the government for reconstruction in Sri Lanka after the end of the civil war?

The Government of Sri Lanka constituted the **Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission in 2010**. Its **observations and recommendations on human rights, international humanitarian law, land rights, resettlement and reconciliation** are noteworthy.

The Government of Sri Lanka, and its development partners initiated programmes in the Northern and Eastern provinces, with objectives of **resettlement, restoration of critical infrastructure, livelihoods and social services to the local population**. This led to **significant improvements**.

The government expenditure in the Northern and Eastern Provinces during 2009-18 is reported to be **\$3.8 billion** with another \$3.4 billion by development partners.

What are the challenges faced by reconstruction efforts in current times?

There is a **lack of funds** for recovery needs.

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The Easter Bombings in 2019 followed by COVID-19 slowed the development process. It was further compounded by the **economic and political crises in 2022**.

The **latest World Bank Sri Lanka Update** says that poverty has more than doubled over the past few years, and **poverty and vulnerability** will continue to rise without appropriate support.

Who are Hill Tamils and what are their specific concerns?

Amongst the refugees, there are 30,000 Persons of Indian Origin. They are known as “Hill Tamils. They have a claim to Sri Lankan citizenship via the Indo-SriLanka Agreements of 1964, 1974 and 1987 and amendments to the Grant of Citizenship to Persons of Indian Origin Act of Sri Lanka.

Lack of documents, as well as a desire to continue living in India, differentiates them from other refugees. They may need special consideration.

What is the issue of the repatriation of refugees?

Today, Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India who wish to **return voluntarily** are being facilitated by the Government of Sri Lanka. Over the last year, 208 individuals have returned voluntarily, supported by the Government of India, bilateral donors and the UNHCR.

India possesses the **capacity and the legal framework** to find durable solutions to the refugee situation in Tamil Nadu.

Voluntary return is the **most desired choice** to end refugee status.

There is a significant population which may not wish to return. This is a cohort **born and educated in India with no knowledge or experience** of their country of origin.

A solution that provides relief from enduring refugee status is the need of the hour.

15. Union Of 100 States – Why India must have many small states. It will make for better economy and better politics

Source: The post is based on the article “**Union Of 100 States – Why India must have many small states. It will make for better economy and better politics**” published in **The Times of India** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.

Relevance: About the demand for smaller states.

News: The Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance (TIPRA) Motha has come up with the demand for creating a separate state of Greater Tipraland.

About the demand for Greater Tipraland

Read more: [The demand for a Greater Tipraland by the TIPRA Motha](#)

Why there is a demand for smaller states?

Too big to function efficiently: There are too many big states by area in India. Such as Rajasthan, UP, MP, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Odisha, and West Bengal.

They are so big to be administered with efficiency. For instance, If UP were a separate country, it would be the fourth-largest by population. But its per capita GDP is closer to Kenya’s.

Low economic contribution and high political participation: Smaller or medium size states or small bits of one or two large states like Maharashtra and Gujarat are performing better economically. But larger states with larger populations wield political power in the Indian federal system.

This imbalance will deepen after delimitation and soon be a source of tension in Indian federalism.

Hence, bigger states can and should be subdivided into two or three or even more states.

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How efficient are the smaller states?

There are enough evidence which suggests that smaller states mostly tend to do better. For example, according to the Eleventh Plan document the then newly created states of **Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh grew economically faster than their parent states** – UP and MP respectively – between 2004-05 to 2008-09.

This is due to better decentralisation of resources. So, India as a continent-size country should have at least 100 states.

16. Freedom and the big freeze

Source: The post is based on the article “Freedom and the big freeze” published in **Business Standard** on 17th February 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: chilling effect and its impact

News: The article discusses the way the government is trying to curtail the freedom of media and NGOs.

What is the chilling effect and civic space?

The word has its roots in the **McCarthyism** that was developed in the United States throughout the 1960s. Similar to present India, people were labelled as traitors by elements in the state in U.S. at that time.

Chilling effect is defined as the curbing of free speech through government laws and actions that appear to target free expression.

In the real world, it is a situation where individual keep quiet even if one knows that there is something wrong with the government policy. It happens due to fear of cases, abuse and hatred, mob violence etc.

Civic space refers to the ability of organizations outside of government like NGOs to function freely.

These two words often come in the report due to the repeated raids/action taken by the government against some organisations.

What are highlights of different reports?

As per a report, **Enforcement Directorate and Central Bureau of Investigation** raids on the Lawyers’ Collective, Centre for Justice and Peace, and other groups have the intended **chilling effect on the rest of civil society**.

Another report said that the **Indian government brings an environment of surveillance that results in a chilling effect on free speech and media freedoms**.

Like these, there are various negative reports against government works that resulted into government action on the organization.

What are the impacts of chilling effects on India?

Chilling effects **reduce the freedom of expression**. It stops people from acting as dissenters. And when such freedom is curtailed by the government, it **is a symbol of dictatorship**.

Media houses in India are mostly owned by large corporations, they rely on the government for licenses and advertisement. Hence, it becomes difficult for them to dissent or speak against the majoritarian government.

Moreover, coverage by the mainstream media in India is attacking the victim of the raid. Whereas, in other democracies, other media companies support medias under attack.

These kinds of attacks on victims by the media have **reduced the solidarity in India. Thus, further reducing the space to speak freely**.

Furthermore, audience is unconcerned and ignored the shrinking spaces and chilling effects.

17. [Reigning over the capital, from above](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Reigning over the capital, from above**” published in **The Hindu** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein.

Relevance– Municipal governance

News– It has been more than a month since the election results to the Delhi Municipal Corporation was declared. But the city still does not have a mayor. Election of the Mayor could not be held in three attempts.

The Lieutenant Governor of Delhi had nominated 10 members to the Municipal Corporation just before the first session. AAP party approached Supreme Court against this decision.

What are different legal opinions about the right of nominated members to vote for election of Mayor?

The Supreme Court observed that “**nominated members cannot go for election**”.

Section 3(b) of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 provides that 10 people who have “**special knowledge or experience** in municipal administration” are to be nominated to the Corporation. Such nominated persons “shall not have the **right to vote** in the meetings of the Corporation.”

Article 243R (2) provides that state legislation can include those with special knowledge of municipal administration to be represented in municipalities. But such persons shall not have the right to vote.

What is the larger picture behind the recent event related to the election of MCD Mayor?

It is part of the Union government’s increasing attempts to gain control over Delhi’s governance. The Union government passed the Government of **National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021**.

It has affirmed the **primacy of the elected government** in Delhi. It has provided that on matters specified by the LG, the Council of Ministers must obtain the permission of the LG before taking any executive decision.

In April 2022, Parliament amended the **Delhi Municipal Corporation Act** to merge the North, South, and East Delhi Municipalities.

It was initiated by the Union government and passed by Parliament, undercutting the Legislative Assembly. The Union government used its **plenary powers under Article 239AA** of the Constitution to pass this law.

What are the issues faced by municipalities in India?

First, Local governments tend to function as **administrative vessels** of the State government, and not as an independent level of government.

Second, the **74th Amendment** provides for **devolution of 18 functions** to municipal governments. But, many of these functions continue to be exercised by **state government-controlled parastatal agencies** such as development authorities.

Third, the executive powers of the municipality are often vested with the State government-appointed commissioners. It renders the mayor to a **ceremonial role**.

Fourth, Municipalities are vested with very few **revenue generating powers**. It keeps them reliant on grants and loans from the State and Union governments.

Fifth, more recently, **national-level urban programmes** such as the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission and the Smart Cities Mission have given the Union government a larger role in driving **urban development and governance**.

What is the way forward for decentralised governance in urban areas?

There needs to be **more clarity about the authority** of each level of government.

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Local autonomy is crucial. But, higher levels of government can also have a legitimate role in local issues to ensure **regional coordination, reduce spatial inequality, or manage economic and environmental externalities**.

18. [How data can empower MPs to serve people better](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**How data can empower MPs to serve people better**” published in **The Indian Express** on **17th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance– Data availability for governance

News– At present, timely and readily available data on critical issues related to population health and socioeconomic well-being is lacking at the Parliamentary Constituency (PC) level.

What are the various efforts for availability of data for governance?

The Government of India made a concerted effort to make a variety of data from current GOI schemes more accessible by launching **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDAP)** in 2012.

In recent years, district-level data from GOI administrative data or independent surveys such as the **National Family Health Surveys** has emerged as a key input for policy deliberations.

A **new interactive PC data tracker** developed by the **Geographic Insights Lab at Harvard University**. For the first time, it has provided data on crucial population, health, and well-being estimates for each of the 543 PCs.

It includes a factsheet for each PC. The data underlying the PC dashboard comes from the **NFHS-4 and NFHS-5**.

Why does the availability of district-level data not help MPs?

District boundaries of India are **not aligned in a straightforward** manner with the 543 Parliamentary Constituencies of India. The districts and PC boundaries **crisscross**.

Even though there is substantial overlap in the names of districts and PCs, it doesn't mean they have the **same size and composition of population**.

The lack of congruence of distinct and PCs populations makes it difficult for MPs to have access to accurate data related to important developmental indicators.

The Ministry of Rural Development issued an order in 2016 to all states and Union Territories to constitute a **District Coordination and Monitoring Committee**, chaired by district MPs.

It was charged with making the **implementation and monitoring of central schemes** more efficient. But the data still pertains to districts and not PCs.

What is the way forward for data accessibility for PCs?

Data-based monitoring and governance of populations is central to identifying priorities.

It is critical that MPs are empowered with appropriate data related to the populations they have to **function effectively, efficiently, and independently** without having to solely rely on the district administration.

A more durable solution would entail that all datasets be consistently geo-tagged for PC.

What is the importance of data accessibility at the level of PC?

Timely and accessible data at the PC-level can transform the work of MPs by highlighting the **most critical issues and at-risk populations** in need of targeted interventions.

It can also empower MPs to **raise policy questions at multiple levels of governments**, from the floor of Parliament to their frequent interactions with the district administrations.

It facilitates the MPs to **independently initiate and sustain meaningful dialogue** with civil society NGOs and other stakeholders to collaboratively address the issues most important to their constituents.

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In a democratic set-up, the PCs offer a natural unit for **policy deliberation and governance**. Bringing timely and frequent data on issues related to population health and well-being to PCs can bring much **symmetry and synergy between districts**.

19. Wrong Answer, Govts – Repeated exam paper leaks should tell authorities that technology not punishment is the cure

Source: The post is based on the article “**Wrong Answer, Govts – Repeated exam paper leaks should tell authorities that technology not punishment is the cure**” published in **The Times of India** on **17th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability.

Relevance: About government recruitment exams.

News: Recently, Uttarakhand witnessed protests against corruption in government recruitment exams. The government in response promulgated an ordinance for “control and prevention of unfair means in recruitment”.

Accordingly, the first case was registered under the new law, where offences are non-bailable, fines go up to Rs 10 crore, and jail terms up to life imprisonment.

What are the other issues with government recruitment exams?

Rajasthan: Last year, the state government promulgated a stricter bill to disincentivise corruption in government recruitment exams. However, the bill does not address the ineffectual surveillance to prevent paper leaks.

West Bengal: The malpractices in the state highlighted the demand-supply mismatch and exploitation in the government ecosystem.

Uttarakhand: The aspirants are complaining that irregularities have spread from exams conducted by the state’s Subordinate Services Selection Commission to those conducted by its Public Service Commission.

What are the reasons behind the issues in government recruitment exams?

The central challenge for the issues is **a) Administrative challenges in long-identified people management across vast student populations and very porous channels, b) The pen-and-paper mode is too easy to sabotage through digital channels.**

To stop irregularities in government recruitment exams, Governments need to work on upgrading exam technologies instead of formulating strict laws.

20. The Express View: Keeping an eye on China

Source: The post is based on the article “**The Express View: Keeping an eye on China**” published in the **Indian Express** on **17th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – India and Neighbourhood relations.

Relevance: About Chinese threat along LAC.

News: The cabinet has approved the Centrally Sponsored Scheme – Vibrant Villages Programme(VVP). The programme aims to improve infrastructure and provide livelihood opportunities along the Line of Actual Control.

The plan is to upgrade 633 villages in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh and the Union Territory of Ladakh.

About Vibrant Villages Programme(VVP)

Read here: [Cabinet approves Centrally Sponsored Scheme- “Vibrant Villages Programme” for the Financial Years 2022-23 to 2025-26](#)

What is the present state of border areas along LAC?

Indian territory along the LAC had no established or limited human settlements. For instance, residents of Ladakh's border villages have long demanded better facilities such as 4G telecommunication towers, better roads, schools with adequate facilities, and 24x7 electricity. The government also neglected people's complaints to surrender acres of traditional grazing land to China's [salami-slicing tactics](#). The attempted Chinese incursion in Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh last year has underlined Chinese threats along the LAC.

What are the new developments planned and developed along LAC?

Infrastructure development:

-A new 4.1 km all-weather tunnel will connect Himachal Pradesh to Ladakh making troops movement easier.

-Tourism and sporting activities are being planned in these areas to provide livelihood opportunities for local people.

Increase in personnel: The government will spend Rs 1,800 crore to raise seven new battalions (9,000 personnel) of the [Indo-Tibetan Border Police \(ITBP\)](#) chiefly deployed along India's borders with China alongside the Army.

Read more: [Build, But Smartly – Infra along LAC is strategically vital. But Joshimath shows why projects must respect mountain ecology](#)

What is the present state of the Chinese threat along LAC?

China is effectively practising salami-slicing tactics on the border. For instance, the villages on the Chinese side are hybrid in nature with a **mixture of civilian and military settlements**. According to security analysts, they can be used as staging posts for incursions into India.

What India should do to address the Chinese threat along LAC?

At present, both sides are working on an idea to **build permanent population settlements along the border** to strengthen each side's claim to the region under their control along the disputed sections of the LAC.

However, India does not have enough time to catch up with China. Hence, building "vibrant" villages and developing infrastructure on the border are important and convey China a message. India should **develop an integrated approach** by making the Vibrant Villages Programme a part of a broader defence strategy with an all-of-government approach.

21. [Going off-course: On the rural jobs scheme and the Centre's bid to change its funding](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "[Going off-course: On the rural jobs scheme and the Centre's bid to change its funding](#)" published in **The Hindu** on **18th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the performance of MGNREGS.

News: The government has slashed the budget for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

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

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

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

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

What are the positive impacts of MGNREGS?

17 yeGoing off-course: On the rural jobs scheme and the Centre's bid to change its fundingsince the implementation of the MGNREGS studies have asserted its net positive impact in rural areas.

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These include, **a)** reducing poverty through providing off-season employment, **b)** improving household consumption among the invariably poor citizens who avail the scheme, **c)** acting as insurance during monsoon deficient seasons, and **d)** allowing greater food security through increased productivity by the works generated.

During the pandemic, the scheme acted as a lifeline for migrant workers from urban areas. Overall, the Scheme functioned as a robust welfare tool.

What are the challenges associated with the performance of MGNREGS?

-The scheme has still **not reached the level of creating more useful assets** beyond roads and irrigation canals. The scheme requires more inclusiveness and better implementation.

-There are also wage delays and underfunding in many areas.

-Aadhaar-based payments have neither reduced corruption nor reduced wage payment delays. Instead, they create hurdles for officials and workers during the implementation.

-The Union Rural Development Minister also suggested amending the Act to change the contribution of funds from 100% by the government to a 60-40 split between the Centre and the States in order to make States “more vigilant regarding corruption”. But this will only lead to further complications in funding as States’ share of taxes is diminishing following GST and the financial stresses.

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

Read here: [The demand for MGNREGS work is unmet](#)

What should be done to improve the performance of MGNREGS?

MGNREGS is salient, especially in poorer States. Hence, the Centre must **ensure its robust funding** instead of putting the onus on individual States. The government must change its approach towards the MGNREGS by **recognising** its potential in catering to the **poor’s right to work**.

22. [A Bigger Idea Of India – Why Indians already command economic heft of \\$5 trillion and how we can leverage this](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A Bigger Idea Of India – Why Indians already command economic heft of \$5 trillion and how we can leverage this**” published in **The Times of India** on **18th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian diaspora.

Relevance: About the Indian diaspora’s wealth.

News: Indian expatriates and persons of Indian origin overseas at present amount to around 3.2 crores. They are highly skilled and successful, and they also have an emotional attachment to any Indian cultural events occurring overseas. It is time for India to leverage this strength.

About the Indian diaspora’s economic wealth

In several countries, Indians are among the top earners. A 2012 estimate of the diaspora’s wealth was \$1 trillion. At present, this wealth has increased manifold.

The collective economic heft of Indians abroad to India’s GDP will be around \$ 3.5 trillion at the end of March. Indians already generate an economic value of well over \$5 trillion.

It means that geographical India will likely have a GDP of \$5 trillion by 2025. But the other India (which includes persons abroad and invested in India) is already a \$5 trillion-plus powerhouse.

Read more: [Indian Diaspora in US and its Impacts on India- US Relations](#)

What are the advantages of the Indian diaspora’s wealth?

A country’s top income earners are pivotal to the country’s economic progress. For instance, they invest, they innovate, they take risks, they back new technology and also they create jobs.

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Indian diaspora already sends \$100 billion in remittances to India annually. This is the highest remittance figure in the world.

What should be done to completely utilise the Indian diaspora's wealth?

In business, network effects kick in when the value of a product is intrinsically tied to the increase in the number of users. The network effect of high-earning, high-performing Indians abroad should be entirely invested in the idea of India's progress.

In the ET Global Business Summit, PM highlighted the immense value of the Indian diaspora. It is time for business leaders and policymakers to integrate the diaspora's economic dynamism.

Read more: [The role played by Indian diaspora in India's growth story and diplomatic efforts](#)

23. [EC Needs A Smart Focus – Cooling-off periods are impractical in social media age](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**EC Needs A Smart Focus – Cooling-off periods are impractical in social media age**” published in **The Times of India** on **18th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About cooling-off periods before polls.

News: The Election Commission has issued notices to representatives of political parties for their controversial tweets during the polling day and the day before the Tripura assembly election.

What is the reason behind the Election Commission's notice?

The EC notice says that the tweets violate parts of Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. The Act prohibits **electioneering 48 hours ahead of polling**. The aim is to allow voters to decide without being “prejudiced” by last-minute appeals.

What are the challenges in enforcing cooling-off periods before polls?

The restriction on electioneering before polls are impossible to enforce in the age of social media and rapidly evolving communications technology.

EC fEC Needs A Smart Focus – Cooling-off periods are impractical in social media aged a committee four years ago to look into the issue. But the committee's suggestions were largely in the nature of exhortations.

Note: *Australia has a similar provision called the blackout period. Australia also has issues in enforcing the blackout period and different media platforms are mentioning the blackout period as unfair.*

Read more: [Election Commission's initiative to enfranchise migrant voters is a step in the right direction](#)

What should be done to address the challenges in cooling-off periods before polls?

EC's credibility lies in conducting complex multiphase elections in the world's largest democracy. In such a scenario, retaining the cooling-off period may end up undermining EC's credibility. Hence, Parliament needs to trust the maturity of voters and should get rid of the cooling-off period. This will help EC to focus on its core responsibility of conducting elections.

Read more: [How to cement the Election Commission's credibility](#)

24. **Special Marriage Act: What is the Act, how does it work, what is the notice period?**

Source: The post is based on the article “Swara Bhasker gets married under Special Marriage Act: What is the Act, how does it work, what is the notice period?” published in **The Indian Express** on **18th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: Special Marriage Act, 1954

News: The article explains the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

What is the Special Marriage Act, 1954?

The Special Marriage Act of 1954 (SMA) governs a **civil marriage** where the state sanctions the marriage rather than the religion.

The SMA **allows marriage between inter-faith or inter-caste couples** without giving up religious identity or opting for conversion.

Whereas, personal laws such as the Muslim Marriage Act, 1954, and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, require either spouse to convert to the religion of the other before marriage.

Who can get married under the Special Marriage Act?

People of all faiths (Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists) across India are eligible to get married under the SMA.

Some customary restrictions such as parties not being within degrees of a prohibited relationship still apply to couples under SMA.

Further, **Section 4 of the SMA** requires that both the parties should be capable of giving consent and must be of sound mind.

The **minimum age to get married under the SMA is 21 years for males and 18 years for females**.

Section 19 of the Act provides that couples belonging to the undivided Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh or Jain religion shall be deemed to end their relationships with their family that might affect their inheritance rights.

What is the procedure for a civil marriage under SMA?

Under Section 5 of the Act, the parties to the marriage are required to give a notice, in writing, to a “**Marriage Officer**” of the district in which at least one of the parties has resided for at least 30 days immediately preceding the notice.

Under Section 6 of the Act, a copy of the notice is kept under the “Marriage Notice Book” which is opened for inspection at reasonable times.

After receiving the notice, the marriage officer publishes it to invite any objections to the marriage within 30 days.

Section 7 deals with “Objection to marriage”.

It allows any person, within 30 days of publishing the notice, to object to the marriage on the ground of violation one or more of the conditions specified in Section 4 of the Act.

If an objection has been made, the Marriage Officer looks into the matter and marriage is not solemnized until the officer is satisfied against the objection or unless the person making such an objection withdraws it.

What are the problems with the publishing of the notice under the SMA?

This provision is often criticized because it is misused to harass couples.

Moreover, **the Delhi High Court in 2009** struck down the practice of posting the notice of intended marriage under the SMA because it **violated the right to privacy**.

The **Allahabad High Court in 2021**, ruled that couples seeking to solemnize their marriage under the SMA can choose not to publish the mandatory 30-day notice of their intention to marry.

25. The protest test in India-Iran ties

Source: The post is based on the article “**The protest test in India-Iran ties**” published in **The Indian Express** on **18th February 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – International Relations**

Relevance: India and Iran bilateral relations

News: Iran foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has recently cancelled his visit to the Raisina meet in India.

This is because the event showed a video of Iranian women cutting their hair during a non-violent protest that began last September in Iran. This event highlights the changing bilateral relations between the two nations.

How has been the relations between India and Iran?

India has been quiet about the protest that happened in Iran.

However, at the **UN Human Rights Council session**, **India did not vote against the resolution** for a fact-finding mission on human rights violations committed by Iran to suppress the protests. Moreover, the event organiser in Delhi refused to pull out the video as demanded by the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

India also ended its energy trade with Iran when the Trump administration reimposed sanctions against it in 2019.

India’s proximity to the US and Iran’s increasing proximity to China have also been a challenge to ties.

Iran was among the Islamic capitals that reacted strongly during the Nupur Sharma blasphemy row.

These all events show that there has been a decline in the bilateral relation of both the countries. However, both of them have joined hands on issues such as connectivity through **Chabahar, terrorism in the region and Afghanistan, etc.**

Hence, despite declining bilateral relations between the two nations, these issues will help them to move ahead together.

26. Missing link in UGC’s foreign university plans to set up campuses in India

Source– The post is based on the article “**Missing link in UGC’s foreign university plans to set up campuses in India**” published in the **Business Standard** on **18th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: Higher education

News- Recently, UGC unveiled draft norms for allowing foreign universities to set up campuses in India with autonomy to decide the admission procedure and fee structure.

What are arguments against foreign university campuses in India?

Students and teachers believe that foreign campuses will not be enough to stop **educational emigration**.

A **report by OECD** re-cently pointed out that Indians studying in **economically developed countries** were the most likely to stay back in their host country and join the local workforce.

The UGC’s move assumes that stud-e-n-ts will be satisfied with the tag of a prestigious global institution. But that is hardly the **central motivation**.

University campu-ses in the US not only offer a **vibrant community of international scholarship**, but also an **ecosystem of internships, apprenticeships, skill development and vocational training courses**.

Fore-ign varsities that offer their curricula in In-dia can only provide a part of the experien-ce enjoyed by students who study abroad.

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The courses offered in foreign institutes have **strong interdisciplinary components** that branch into **skill-development and vocational training**. Indian students who wish to bring their skills on a par with **global industry requirements**, would prefer to go to a university's home campus.

What are arguments in favour of foreign university campuses in India?

Indian students who want to study abroad will be **more than a million** in the near future. Campuses of foreign universities in India can admit only a fraction of the students going abroad. The students who do not plan to emigrate may choose to study in the campuses of foreign higher education institutions in India.

Foreign universities in India will **bridge the gap between the skill-development system and traditional degree education** by identifying and mitigating bottlenecks in India's skill development ecosystem.

It will also augment **technology transfer, research and innovation** in the country. This will further lead to the creation of **strategic training programmes** and a pool of **proficient individuals** who can leverage **emerging global opportunities**.

This provides an opportunity to tap into the very large pool of **NRI educators** in universities all over the world and who can bring the best of both **local knowledge and international experience and connections**.

What is the way forward to improve higher education in India?

The higher education ecosystem in India needs to be more **thoroughly integrated** with the job market, in terms of **apprenticeships, skill-training workshops, and vocational courses**. There is a need for investment in the post-curricular ecosystem.

India should address the **skilling needs** of its population. For **vocational skills**, it should look towards the **German, Swiss, Austrian and Singaporean apprentice systems for inspiration**.

The government must first focus on implementing its landmark announcements as the **National Research Foundation and the allocation of 25% of the defense R&D budget** for higher education system and the private sector in an effective way.

General Studies Paper – 3

General Studies - 3

1. [India's fiscal dilemma](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's fiscal dilemma**” published in **The Indian Express** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government budgeting

Relevance– Fiscal situation of economy

News– The recently announced budget provides a good opportunity to study the fiscal situation of the country.

What is the good news for the fiscal scenario of the country?

The **fiscal situation** has proved resilient to the successive shocks.

Tax collections as a percent of GDP are actually marginally higher than they were in 2018-19. On the spending side, the composition has improved. **Capital expenditure** has increased from 1.5% of GDP to a budgeted 3.5% of GDP.

Sizable amount of **off-budget expenditures** were brought back onto the budget.

The fiscal deficit is now on a **downward trajectory**. It is budgeted to fall to about 6% of GDP next year from a Covid peak of more than 9%.

What are the mixed developments related to the fiscal situation?

Personal income taxes have shown an encouraging rise. But, this is accompanied by increases in exemption limits. It means that taxation is now resting on a **narrower base of taxpayers**.

The GST's promise has not yet been realised. **The collection ratio** has remained essentially the same as it was five years ago. It is because **efficiency gains** have been offset by repeated reductions in rates.

Furthermore, **corporate tax revenues** have declined significantly, because tax rates have been reduced.

What are bad signals for the fiscal situation?

There has been a **notable increase in expenditures** over the past five years. The true increase in expenditure remains substantial, exceeding 1.5% of GDP.

The **structural fiscal deficit** is budgeted to 6% of GDP next fiscal due to high expenditure.

The large deficits since 2018-19 have necessitated **large amounts of borrowing**. It has led to an increase in **interest obligations**. They now absorb nearly half of the centre's tax revenues.

The second issue is **centralisation**. The states will receive just **31% of gross tax revenues** next fiscal, compared with 37% in 2018-19. This reflects the centre's **increasing use of cesses**, which are not shared with the states.

A **subtler form of centralisation** is taking place on the **expenditure side**. **Non-interest, non-subsidy current expenditure** is being compressed by 1% of GDP in 2022-23 and 0.5 % of GDP next year.

The centre is scaling back its transfers to states for various **centrally sponsored schemes**. Some of the reduction can be justified because it is aimed at forcing the states to improve their efficiency in their spending and managing their funds.

What are the limitations of centralisation for fiscal consolidation?

In an optimistic scenario, Centralisation can lead to improvement in **state government efficiency**. But, the centre will need to find other ways to reduce the deficit to its target of 4.5% of GDP.

Centralisation may not succeed in **improving efficiency**. In that case, states would either need to reduce the services provided to their people or increase their borrowing. The **overall fiscal position** might not improve at all.

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2. [India-U.S. space cooperation, from handshake to hug](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India-U.S. space cooperation, from handshake to hug**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of space

Relevance– International cooperation in space for India

News– Recently, India and the United States have agreed to advance space collaboration in several areas under the ‘initiative on critical and emerging technology’ umbrella.

What shows convergence of interests for space collaboration between the US and India?

In November 2022, the USA started its **Artemis programme** by launching the **Orion spacecraft** towards the moon. India is set to embark on its first human spaceflight mission in 2024.

The two countries have also taken significant efforts in **advancing the private space sector**.

What are structural factors limiting US and India collaboration in space?

Mismatch in interests– The U.S. has committed to **returning to the moon**. They plan to stay there for the long term. Their ambitions are firmly set on the moon.

India’s scientific community focuses on building the **nation’s capability in and under earth orbits**. India’s top priority is to substantially **increase its satellite and launch capabilities in earth orbits** and catch up with other nations such as China.

Asymmetry in capabilities– The U.S. has the **highest number of registered satellites** in space. It also has a range of launch vehicles serving both commercial and national security needs. SpaceX managed to achieve a record 61 launches in 2022.

India has just over 60 satellites in orbit. It cannot undertake **double digit launches annually**. The Indian government also opened the space industry to the private sector only in 2020.

Disagreements on space governance– Even though countries have a mindset to collaborate, the **structural factors overpower diplomatic incentives** to pursue long term Cooperation.

What is the way forward for India and the US to collaborate in the space sector?

There is a need for **long term cooperation** to sustain the **engagement between academics, the private sector and state-led entities** in the two countries.

Sustained engagement could also take the form of **collaborating on highly specialised projects** such as the NASA--ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar Mission.

India and the U.S. must find **novel solutions** to cooperate in the new space age to achieve a **meaningful partnership**.

One form of cooperation is a **partnership between state and private entities**. India could send its astronauts to train at American private companies. This could help India reduce its dependence on Russia.

Another novel arrangement could be a consortium led by the government owned **New Space India Limited** which involves private companies in the U.S.

This setup could accelerate **India’s human spaceflight programme** and give the U.S. an opportunity to accommodate Indian interests in earth orbits.

3. [A question of quorum](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A question of quorum**” published in the **Business Standard** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Regulation of economic activities

News– Competition Commission of India has invoked the “**doctrine of necessity**” to clear six deals involving mergers & acquisitions and investment proposals.

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What are the issues raised by this event?

It lacked the **requisite three-member quorum** after the Chairperson retired. The **Competition Act** provides that there should be at least three members to approve deals.

But, the CCI obtained a green signal for a two-member quorum from the law ministry to the corporate affairs ministry.

What is the legality of action by CCI?

CCI's actions were not a violation of the law.

Section 15 of the Competition Act provides that no proceeding of the commission shall be invalid due to **any vacancy in, or any defect in the constitution** of the Commission.

As per section 15, any **irregularity in the procedure of the Commission** not affecting the merits of the case shall not make the proceeding invalid.

What are the important questions raised by CCI action?

The first is the delay in the **appointment of a new chairperson**.

The second is that the government was unable to find a suitable successor by the time of Chairman retirement. In this scenario, a **reference to the law ministry** on the issue of a quorum ahead of the event would have also **reduced the anxiety for companies and investors** waiting for their deals to be cleared.

The third is whether a two-member commission has the **ability to scrutinise the merits** of so many deals.

4. [Challenging Google – New AI-driven search can be disruptive](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Challenging Google – New AI-driven search can be disruptive**” published in the **Business Standard** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Relevance: About AI-driven search engines.

News: Artificial intelligence (AI) programs involving Natural Language Processing (NLP) have caused a shift in the way people use web searches. AI-driven search engines may lead to radical changes in the way search is monetised via advertising, and it could challenge Google's dominant search engine.

What is ChatGPT?

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

What is the potential of Generative AI?

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

How AI-driven search engines are different from Conventional engines?

Conventional engines list only relevant links. But the AI-driven search engines such as ChatGPT and Bard are different from Conventional engines as **a)** They have behavioural sense and they offer more “human” filtering of search results, **b)** They present search results in an essay format rather than just displaying links, **c)** They have the ability to write essays or even poetry on demand. AI-assisted fiction is another possibility that may change the publishing industry.

They also have other applications such as one can use ChatGPT to write software code to perform various functions, or perhaps using NLP to build an autonomous driving application.

What are the challenges with AI-driven search engines?

The AI-driven search engines have the following concerns, **a)** Though their searches are plausible and comprehensive, they are not necessarily accurate, **b)** There is a possibility that they will over-reach assertions. Conspiracy theories and opinions can be presented as facts if they are stated by “authorities”. For instance, Bard asserted the [James Webb Space Telescope](#) was the first

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telescope to take pictures of an exoplanet, which is wrong, **c)** Their ability to write essays and poems might create a new kind of plagiarism.

What do AI-driven search engines mean as a business activity?

NLP-based searches could lead to an entirely new revenue model for one of the Web's biggest market segments. Advertising revenue share might move to new players, or perhaps create some entirely different revenue model.

Google has been dominating search and it has built an empire around the cash cow of resulting advertising revenues. This is finally being challenged now with AI-driven search engines.

5. [Unmet needs in wireless regulations](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Unmet needs in wireless regulations**" published in **Business Standard** on **14th February 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Economy**

Relevance: **concerns associated with telecom sectors in India**

News: The communication sector in India is suffering from various hurdles and there is a need to resolve these.

What are the problems with the communication sector in India?

Lack of expenditure: The expenditure on roads and railways is twice the amount on communications.

Lack of proper regulatory policy: The communication sector in India lacks proper policy regulations as seen in the case of Vodafone.

Vodafone was imposed with **retrospective taxes** in 2007. However, it was later set aside by the Supreme Court.

Vodafone and other operators **fought licence fees claimed** on non-telecom revenues included in aggregate gross revenues (**AGR**) since 2003 while the interest on dues kept on rising.

However, in 2021 a four-year temporary relief package was announced on debt repayments while the interest kept on rising on the dues.

Due to these improper solutions Vodafone and its operators kept on suffering. However, on 3rd February, **the government decided to convert Vodafone's dues into government-held equity**.

These all show the **irresponsible behaviour of the government** and lack of proper policy measures which made Vodafone to suffer for a decade.

Wireless policies and the use of optical fibres: As per ICRA, full-scale 5G deployments across India would require expenditure of about Rs 3 trillion because nearly two-thirds of the towers lack fibre connectivity.

However, looking at the high debt of telecoms and high cost of fibres, it is unexpected that telecommunication companies would invest heavily.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for the policy makers to come up with wireless policies based on successful models in other countries.

Other requirements: There is a need to **enable 6GHz for Wi-Fi, allow speeds of up to 10 Gbps, and support for local product development** and production instead of relying on imports.

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6. [Indian Air Force's revised doctrine adopts a holistic approach to the country's security imperatives](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Indian Air Force's revised doctrine adopts a holistic approach to the country's security imperatives**” published in **The Indian Express** on **14th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance– Future strategies of defence forces

News– Recently air force has released its revised doctrine

Why has India been reluctant to use air power?

There is inadequate understanding of the **inherently complex and rapid technology-driven changes** in air power's characteristics and capabilities.

India has a **traditional surface-dominant security outlook**. It stems from dealing with a primarily continental threat.

What are salient features of Indian Air Force revised doctrine?

It underscores the necessity of a **more holistic approach** towards India's security and what aerospace can do to bolster it.

It provides for a clearer understanding of the **redefined characteristics of aerospace power and its expanded capabilities** for national interests and strengthening regional security.

It provides a **clear articulation of the Service objectives**. It has evolved out of combat experience, assessments of international conflicts and its experience gained in international exercises.

It covers the **entire spectrum of future aerospace applications**. Apart from peace and war, this also includes the unique **no-war-no-peace condition** confronting the country. **State-sponsored terrorism**, increasing border stand-offs and internal security challenges make peace in India uneasy.

The doctrine has the potential to accommodate major changes in wartime strategy. It allows for the use of **future precepts in the employment of aerospace power** in the Indian security context. The doctrine's focus on the criticality of controlling the skies.

The **IAF's robust joint credentials** remain a dominant flavour in its wartime air strategy. It is laterally connected with the land and maritime strategies.

The impacts of **IAF offensive capability** on the enemy's politico-military will and ability to wage war have been given significant doctrinal salience. This was evident in the use of air power in the 1971 war when the air force targeted **energy systems and communication networks**.

The necessity of a **multi-domain approach** in India's future joint military strategy, battle space transparency, combat networks, cyber and electronic warfare, information warfare constitute the foundation of IAF's future air strategy.

Concepts of operations, human resources, training, and operational testing and evaluation remain priority doctrinal precepts.

The document underscores the IAF's increasing role in the **strategy for security and growth for all in the region (SAGAR), as well as in the larger Indo-Pacific construct**.

The doctrine acknowledges that other services like **civil aviation and space agencies** also contribute to this strength. The document refrains from asserting ownership of this arena.

It acknowledges that **future aerospace and defence capabilities, related R&D, and associated civil-military industrial capabilities** are national force multipliers.

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7. [The 4 Pillars Holding Up India's Expanding Middle](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"The 4 Pillars Holding Up India's Expanding Middle"** published in **The Times of India** on **14th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About 4S framework for middle class prosperity.

News: A sharp decline in poverty levels, now down to about 16% of the population, is witnessed in India due to the emergence of the middle class at the national level. According to an estimate, about one-third of the population is estimated to have entered the middle-class.

This is because of government's systematic approach to increase middle-class wellbeing in the past. According to the author, these initiatives can be articulated through the 4S framework: Sampannata, Surakshit Bhavishya, Shreshtha Jeevan and Saralta.

What are the 4S framework for middle class prosperity?

Sampannata: Enrichment through inflation control and loans

Between 2014 and 2022, annual inflation was 4.6%. Despite multiple global crises, the CPI was at 5.7% in December 2022, which was much lower than many G20 countries.

This ensured **a) greater liquidity** for the middle-class, **b) lower EMIs** resulted in decline in loan rates. For example, student loan rates were priced about 8% in 2022 from around 14% in 2014, **c) middle-class families found lower EMIs easier to purchase more houses, cars and also take more loans for the higher education, d) one-nation one-tax initiative of GST** has led to gross savings of an estimated Rs 18 lakh-crore, which works out to an annual household saving of Rs 12,000, **e) 120 million of 380 million beneficiaries of the PM Mudra Yojana** were middle-class individuals.

Surakshit Bhavishya: Securing a healthy future

This includes significant government efforts to provide affordable healthcare and quality education. Steps in this direction include **a) 353 new universities in the last nine years, b) Opening up of 15 new AIIMS and 261 new medical colleges, c) 41 Indian universities featured in global rankings in 2023 compared to just nine in 2014, d) 50-90% cheaper generic medicines available at 9,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras, e) 87 crore free screenings is done at 1.5 lakh**

Ayushman Bharat Centres.

Shreshtha Jeevan: A better life

-By 2022, India built 1.65 lakh kms of national highways and had the **second largest road network in the world**, after the US, due to a **tenfold increase in capital expenditure** on roads and bridges,

-India now has metro connectivity in 20 cities. India is now a year away from having the third largest metro network globally.

-India has the **highest per capita mobile data consumption rate** and among the **lowest cost of data per GB** in the world.

Nearly 80% of India's 120 crore mobile phone users and 80 crore internet users are expected to receive 5G connectivity within a year. If done it **will be the world's fastest 5G roll-out**.

-Apart from that, visible improvements is seen in **housing, transportation, tap water connections, and waste management**. On an average, **power is now available for 22 hours** against 12.5 hours in 2015.

Saralta: Hassle-free existence

-India's cashless digital payment ecosystem is hailed as among the best in the world. UPI accounted for 65% of the total digital transactions in 2021-22.

-DigiLocker facility for paperless certificate authentication has been embraced by the middle-class.

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Overall, India's rising global profile in a multitude of areas has inculcated a new sense of pride among Indian middleclass. Indian government remains committed to boosting prosperity for the middle-class through the 4S framework, providing an alternative development model to the world.

8. [Make Then Sell – India's ambitious defence export target comes up against long delays in product development](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Make Then Sell – India's ambitious defence export target comes up against long delays in product development**” published in **The Times of India** on **14th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About India's defence export.

News: AeroIndia 2023 which kicked off recently is not just being promoted as the biggest exhibition of India's air power but also a significant platform to push Indian defence manufacturing to the next level.

Recently, the PM has announced an ambitious target of \$5 billion annual defence exports by 2024-25.

What is the significance of AeroIndia for India's defence export target?

Facilitate integration: Given the changing nature of warfare, the **integration of air power with other arms of the military** has become crucial. For instance, Asia is largely a seascape. So India's ability to protect its interests will largely depend on the integration of naval and air assets.

Boost defence production and exports: AeroIndia will boost the government's efforts towards self-reliance, a joint production of advanced technologies, and increase defence exports. All these have immediate implications for India's strategic security.

What are the challenges with India's defence export target?

India's defence exports have increased from just Rs 1,520 crore in 2017 to a record Rs 14,000 crore in 2021-22. But still, there is significant headroom for growth.

India's defence sector exports have two significant issues.

Firstly, India's defence **exports have largely comprised low to medium-tech items** like personal protective equipment, offshore patrol vessels, spares for radars, coastal surveillance systems, helicopters, and electronic and engineering parts.

Secondly, exports are further held back by advanced platforms like LCA being **produced at a very slow pace**, with even domestic orders yet to be satisfied.

To overcome the India's defence export challenges, **a) India must require quicker production timelines, b) Different arms of the defence industry – private and government – need to work together.**

9. [Let's Go Against the Grain of Wheat, Rice Bias](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Let's Go Against The Grain Of Wheat, Rice Bias**” published in **The Times of India** on **15th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Agriculture

Relevance: **benefits of millets and measures taken to promote it**

News: The article discusses the reasons behind the decline in the use of millets and the efforts taken by the government to revive it.

What were the reasons behind the decline in the use of millets?

One of the reasons behind the decline in the use of millets is the **green revolution**.

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Green revolution technology and policy environment gave rice and wheat an advantage over millets and millets were considered as **inferior crops**, despite of its multiple benefits.

What are the benefits of millets?

Millets are **nutritious**. They reduce – **a)** Iron deficiency anaemia, **b)** Risk of type II diabetes, **c)** BMI and obesity, **d)** Calcium deficiency **e)** helps with hyperlipidemia.

Millets are also found to help overcome malnutrition. Within millets, **minor millets are even more nutritious and healthy**.

Moreover, **millets are the least water demanding crops**. They can live in harsh environments and withstand various biotic and abiotic stresses like rise in temperature, drought etc.

However, the government has taken several measures to promote millets.

What steps have taken by the government to promote millets?

GoI and some states have taken some initiatives since 2012 to promote millets.

Millets were officially **declared as Nutri Cereals in 2018** which was declared as the **National Year of Millets**.

India has also brought millets on the global platform by **getting UNGA** to declare the year **2023 as an International Year of Millet**.

However, despite these efforts, there is hardly any improvement in the consumption of millets.

As per **NSSO's consumer expenditure survey**, the consumption of millets amongst the lower section of the society has declined from 1. 59 kg millets/ month per capita in 1993-94 to 0. 27 kg by 2011-2012.

However, the budget 2023-24 has tried to address the issues related to millets.

What are some efforts announced in the Budget 2023-24 for millets?

The budget has designated millets as “**Shree Anna**”. Therefore, emphasis needs to be given to expand the area under millet and increase their productivity by making them attractive to the producers.

The budget has also announced **support for R&D in millets** through a centre of excellence to be set up in Indian Institute of Millets Research, Hyderabad.

What can be the way ahead?

First, India needs to speed up technological development for millets. Millet specific machines and equipment need to be developed to handle large scale production.

Second, Producers need to be empowered through FPOs, SHGs and cooperatives, to take advantage of rising consumer preference and willingness to pay better prices for millets.

Read More: [Millet Production in India – Explained](#)

10. [Generative AI prompts serious questions of copyright](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Generative AI prompts serious questions of copyright**” published in the **Livemint** on **15th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About AI generated art.

News: The improvements in artificial intelligence (AI) with ChatGPT has shown the importance of generative AI.

How generative AI aid in creating AI generated art?

-Ordinary people with no formal artistic training can create stunning visual arts and images in the style of famous artists using generative AI tools like DALL-E and Stable Diffusion.

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

What are the challenges associated with AI generated art?

Issue of copyright: To create output in the styles of so many artists, the AI must have been trained on hundreds of samples of their work. Every output it generates is an original work that has no one-to-one correspondence to any part or whole of any image of a given artist.

However, it is not clear whether it constitute the offence of “copying” under copyright law or not. The **US Copyright Office** has already declared that AI generated art is not entitled to intellectual property protection as it lacks the “nexus between the human mind and creative expression”.

Read more: [Challenging Google – New AI-driven search can be disruptive](#)

11. [Boosting productivity – Nano-fertilisers will improve efficiency](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Boosting productivity – Nano-fertilisers will improve efficiency**” published in the **Business Standard** on **15th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies.

Relevance: About advantages of Nano-fertilisers.

News: Recently, the government approved the commercial release of nano-DAP (di-ammonium phosphate). The first batch of nano-DAP will hit the market in the upcoming kharif sowing season.

About nano-DAP

DAP is the second-most used plant nutrient in India. The actual production cost of conventional DAP is around Rs 4,000 per bag.

On the other hand, a 500 ml bottle of nano-DAP, equivalent to a 50-kg bag of conventional DAP, is likely to cost the farmers around Rs 600. It is less than half the subsidised price of Rs 1,350 for normal DAP.

About other nano-fertilisers

The government already rolled out [nano-urea](#) in 2021. Urea is the most-consumed fertiliser in India.

Nano versions of the third-most important plant nutrient potash and micronutrients like zinc and copper are said to be in advanced stages of development.

What are the advantages of Nano-fertilisers?

More effective suppliers of plant nutrition: Nano-fertilisers containing soil nutrients in ultra-minuscule-sized particles, measuring less than one-billionth of a millimetre. They generally prove more effective suppliers of plant nutrition because of **a)** the larger number of particles per unit of volume, **b)** a higher cumulative surface area, **c)** greater water solubility and **d)** after sprayed on leaves, nano-particles easily penetrate the stomata and other openings to get assimilated in plant cells.

Hence, they also provide increased yield on the field. For instance, crops sprayed with liquid nano-urea have been found to give a 3-16% higher yield than those treated with equivalent quantities of granulated urea.

Saving on fertiliser subsidies: India’s fertiliser subsidy bill is estimated at Rs 2.25 trillion this year. It can be dropped down to nil with the introduction of nano-fertilisers.

Provide chances for export: The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative, which has pioneered the research, development and commercialisation of these patent-protected nano fertilisers is already receiving requests from other countries for nano fertilisers.

The **other advantages** are, **a)** Nano-fertilisers will make India self-reliant in vital farm inputs, **b)** minimise the damage to the environment as they do not pollute air, soil and water like normal fertilisers do, **c)** facilitate higher farm output at a lower cost to boost the profitability of agriculture and **d)** raise farmers’ income.

They make farming sustainable and eco-friendly.

Read more: [Cost advantages – Nano-fertilisers will reduce subsidy outgo](#)

12. [Flying high into Amrit Kaal](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Flying high into Amrit Kaal**” published in **The Indian Express** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure

Relevance– Air connectivity

News– India’s civil aviation policy is bearing fruit. It is set to reach new heights

What is the status of the civil aviation industry in India?

India is the **third largest domestic civil aviation market** in the world after China and the US. Domestic passengers more than doubled from 60 million in 2014 to 143 million in 2020.

There has also been a **significant increase in international air passengers** — from 23 million to 35 million.

Indian flight operators have a **fleet size of approximately 750 aircraft**. The fleet size is expected to increase rapidly.

India’s civil aviation sector has also provided **employment opportunities** for engineers, trained technicians and airline service staff.

What is the UDAN scheme and its achievements?

In 2017, the Government of India started a **Regional Connectivity Scheme called UDAN** to make flight operations to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities **commercially viable**.

It approved a budget for the revival of existing unserved and underserved airports and airstrips through the Regional Connectivity Scheme.

Today, approximately 475 UDAN routes have been operationalised.

Since its inception, **over 1.14 crore passengers** have travelled in more than 2.16 Lakh UDAN flights. Rs 2,300 crore has been paid to selected airlines by the government as a part of the viability gap funding.

What are other steps taken by the government under civil aviation policy?

MRO sector– The growth in the country’s fleet size is positively correlated with the growth in MRO-related work.

The market size of the MRO sector in India stood at **around \$2 billion**. It is catering to 15% of our domestic MRO work.

The government issued **new MRO Guidelines** to encourage MRO organisations and OEMs to set up workshops in India.

Many steps taken towards making India a global hub of MRO. It includes **100% FDI permitted via automatic route, a liberalised policy for borrowing and lending** in foreign currency and Indian currency and **reduction of GST** from 18% to 5% with full Input Tax Credit.

Manpower– **1165 commercial pilot licences** were issued in 2022. This is the largest number of licences over the last decade.

The need for pilots has also led to an increase in **Flight Training organisations**. Currently, India has 35 approved FTOs with 53 bases and an additional 10 are on the anvil.

Similarly, the number of Air Traffic Controllers has increased from a little over 2,000 in 2012 to close to 4,000 in 2022.

Drones– Last year, the government issued guidelines for **Production Linked Incentives** for drones with an outlay of Rs 120 crore over three years. There has been a **massive liberalisation of the drone policy** under which 25 forms have been reduced to just five.

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Agriculture sector– Civil aviation policy has contributed to agriculture also. The **Krishi Udan Scheme** is focused on **transporting perishable food products** of farmers from the hilly areas, north-eastern states and tribal areas.

India's civil aviation ministry has also been instrumental in **rescuing Indians and foreign nationals** during emergencies.

As a part of the **Vande Bharat Mission**, India facilitated the travel of 1.83 crore passengers during the various COVID-19 waves. **Operation Ganga** rescued 22,500 Indian students from Ukraine during the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Tourism sector– The **synergy between tourism and civil aviation** in propagating India's tourism potential is well-known. The Ministry of Tourism also funds more than 50 routes and has approved another 10 routes under the RCS-UDAN Scheme.

13. [A manifesto for tackling the silent pandemic of AMR](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“A manifesto for tackling the silent pandemic of AMR”** published in **The Hindu** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance– Various diseases and treatments

News– As the current G-20 president, and as a vulnerable country, India has a key role in ensuring that AMR remains high on the global health agenda.

What shows the prevalence of antimicrobial resistance?

New drugs have become resistant to drugs. There is **rising misuse and overuse of antibiotics** in humans and animals.

In 2019, AMR was associated with an estimated 4.95 million human deaths. A 2018 **report by OECD** warned of a phenomenal increase of resistance to antibiotics by 2030.

AMR adds to the **burden of communicable diseases** and **strains the health systems** of a country. **ICMR study in 2022** showed that the resistance level increases from 5% to 10% every year for broad-spectrum antimicrobials.

An **Indian Network for Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance study** indicated a high rate of resistance to commonly used drugs such as ciprofloxacin, erythromycin and clindamycin.

According to **WHO**, resistance to ciprofloxacin varied from 8.4% to 92.9% for Escherichia coli and from 4.1% to 79.4% for Klebsiella pneumoniae.

The **global epidemic of TB** has been severely impacted by multidrug resistance. Patients have less than a 60% chance of recovery.

What are the impacts of AMR?

Microbial resistance to antibiotics has made it harder to **treat infections** such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and several food-borne diseases.

AMR also imposes a huge health cost on the patient in the form of **longer hospitalisation, health complications and delayed recovery**.

It puts patients undergoing **major surgeries and treatments**, such as chemotherapy, at a **greater Risk**.

What were important developments during the Third Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance?

It was held in Muscat. It led to the adoption of the **Muscat Ministerial Manifesto on AMR**.

The Muscat Manifesto recognised the need to **accelerate political commitments** in the implementation of **One Health action** for controlling the spread of AMR.

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It also recognised the need to address the impact of AMR not only on humans but also on animals, and in areas of **environmental health, food security and economic growth and development**.

The conference focused on **three health targets**: reduce the total amount of antimicrobials used in the agri-food system **at least by 30-50% by 2030**.

Eliminate **use in animals and food production** of antimicrobials that are medically important for human health

Ensure that by 2030 at least **60% of overall antibiotic consumption** in humans is from the **WHO “Access” group of antibiotics**.

What is the One Health approach?

It requires all stakeholders to work together towards an **integrated programme** linking challenges of humans, terrestrial and aquatic animals, plant health, food and feed production and the environment.

What are the steps taken by the Indian government to overcome AMR?

The **National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (2017-21)** emphasised the **effectiveness** of the government’s initiatives for hand hygiene and sanitation programmes such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Kayakalp and Swachh Swasth Sarvatra.

The government has also attempted to **increase community awareness** about **healthier and better food production practices**, especially in the animal food industry.

The **National Health Policy 2017** also offered specific guidelines regarding use of antibiotics, restricting the use of antibiotics for growth promotion in livestock. It also called for **scrutiny of prescriptions** to assess antibiotic usage in hospitals and among doctors.

What is the way forward to overcome AMR?

The **various G-20 health summits** spread through 2023 offer an opportunity for India to ensure that all aspects of AMR are addressed and countries commit to progress.

Some key areas for action are:

Surveillance of priority pathogens and sharing of data, including through WHO’s GLASS platform.

Regulatory and policy action to stop use of antibiotics that are important for human health in animals.

No use of antibiotics for growth promotion in animals.

More **government investment in research and innovation** for new antibiotics.

Explore **use of vaccines** to prevent certain infections due to AMR organisms in humans and animals.

Special focus on **combating TB and drug-resistant TB**.

Further, There is also an urgent need to reduce the usage of **antimicrobials in the agri-food system**. Countries such as the Netherlands and Thailand have decreased their usage by almost 50%.

14. Our labour market’s playing field is in the process of being levelled

Source: The post is based on the article “Our labour market’s playing field is in the process of being levelled” published in **Live Mint** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Indian Economy**

Relevance: **evolution of the Indian multinational companies**

News: The article discusses how the Indian companies evolved with the time and the way they have provided job opportunities to the Indian labour market.

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How did the companies evolve in India?

Under the license raj: MNCs in those times relied on their regulatory connectivity and their capital, technology and product investments bred higher productivity and wages.

Companies at that time focused more on performance, potential and hard work than a surname.

After the reforms of 1991: These reforms ended license raj and brought changes in the business climate for Indian entrepreneurs. The changes were reflected in staffing, financing and governing of businesses.

Companies like Tata, Reliance and Mahindra attracted global and local investors. These Indian entrepreneurs distinguished between their shareholder, board member and executive role in companies.

They also executed mindful strategies that offered employees vision, purpose, meritocracy and growth.

Later, these changes were also seen in a wide range of companies like IT (Infosys, TCS, HCL, etc), finance (HDFC, ICICI, Axis) and consumer goods (Marico, Dabur, Britannia, etc).

The combination of growth and governance led to a massive expansion in the **price-to-earnings multiples of their stocks.**

It also led to five changes – **a)** multinationals shifted from the European model (country head as CEO) to the American model (country head as ambassador with global vertical reporting), **b)** institutionally funded startups (Flipkart, Ola, Ather, Nyka, etc.) attracted experienced managers with attractive equity, **c)** rising prosperity made self-expression a priority, and a career became an individual, not a family decision, **d)** society, economy and citizens realized that it is not necessary to be Western to be modern and people became more confident and secure about their future and identity and **e)** new business and startup ideas started coming up.

What does the future hold for the Indian companies?

There have been rapid changes in the Indian companies and with the time it would be difficult to categorize what is an Indian company because today everything has been globalized and interdependent.

For example, an Indian car has imported products, HDFC is an Indian bank despite being majority-owned by foreigners, etc.

Furthermore, the diminishing labour market advantage for the Indian companies will become irrelevant with the coming time because it is the best talent that will be employed.

[15. R&D: An inside job – For innovation to power economic growth, Indian industry must raise its investment in in-house R&D five-fold](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“R&D: An inside job – For innovation to power economic growth, Indian industry must raise its investment in in-house R&D five-fold”** published in the **Business Standard** on **16th February 2023.**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Development and employment.

Relevance: About R&D investment in India.

News: India lags in Research and development (R&D) investment both on the government side and industrial side.

About the R&D investment around the globe

The world invests a little over 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) in R&D. Of the \$2 trillion spent on global R&D, the top five (of over 180) countries (**the US, China, Japan, Germany and South Korea**) alone account for three-quarters.

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On the industries side, the top five industries (pharmaceuticals, automobiles, technology hardware, software and electronics) account for almost 73% of all industrial R&D. Within industrial R&D top 20 companies account for 22% of global industrial R&D.

About R&D investment in India

India is now the world's fifth largest economy. But in total R&D investment, India ranked 16th, below Israel.

Note: Israel is a country with a GDP of one-sixth India's, and a population under one-hundredth of India's.

On the industrial R&D investment scale, with \$7 billion in investments India is ranked 22nd between Poland and Singapore. In short, Indian firms invest 0.3% of GDP in in-house R&D, compared to a world average of 1.5%.

The European Commission report stated that India has only 24 firms among the top 2,500 investors in R&D worldwide. On the other hand, 822, 678, 233 and 114 firms are from the US, China, Japan and Germany, respectively.

What are the reasons for low industrial R&D investment in India?

Sector	R&D expenditure (\$billion)	Total number of firms	Number of firms in top five economies				
			USA	Germany	Japan	China	India
Pharmaceuticals & biotechnology	240.51	478	263	10	25	79	11
Software & computer services	225.84	336	196	6	5	73	2
Technology hardware & equipment	185.62	207	71	3	15	47	0
Automobiles & parts	155.48	148	28	14	25	45	5
Electronic & electrical equipment	93.26	249	41	10	30	106	0
Industrial Engineering	39.48	167	28	19	22	52	0
Construction & materials	34.86	65	4	2	10	35	0
Chemicals	28.25	114	21	8	28	33	1
Health care equipment & services	25.41	89	46	7	6	13	0
General industrials	23.10	64	15	5	12	16	0
Top 3 sectors	651.99	1,021	530	19	45	199	13
Top 10 sectors	1,051.86	1,917	713	84	178	499	19
Total (2,500)	1,236.06	2,500	822	114	233	678	24/31*

*Considering the Centre for Technology, Innovation and Economic Research's (CTIER's) list of top 100 R&D spenders, there would be 31 Indian firms in the global 2,500 R&D spenders.
Note: (i) Figures in euros were converted to dollars using the EUR-USD exchange rate of 1.13 as on 31 December 2021 and as mentioned in the EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard; Source: EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard (2022); CTIER

Source: Business Standard

India's limited presence in top sectors: Based on the Centre for Technology, Innovation and Economic Research (CTIER) list, India has no firms in five (technology hardware, electronic equipment, aerospace, general industrials, construction materials) of the 10 top industrial sectors.

Note: India's most profitable firms are in financial services, petrochemicals, metal processing and software.

Missing giant investor: India is missing one giant investor in in-house R&D. For instance, India's top-ranked R&D investment firm is Tata Motors with an annual R&D spend of \$3.5 billion globally. But at the global level, it stands only at the 58th position.

Lacks government investment: Each of the top seven global firms invests more than all of India's R&D investment, this includes every firm, university and government laboratory put together.

How does India's industrial R&D investment compare to that of China?

Low service sector investment: Indian software firms are service firms to the world's product firms. But most of the top 10 Chinese software firms are also service firms. India's top 10 software firms invest only 1% in R&D compared to 8% in China.

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Data for 2014 industrial R&D investment showed that India had 26 firms to China's 301. But in 2021, China has 678 firms to India's 24.

Read more: [Revitalizing public R&D could transform innovation, and give meaning to our doctrine of strategic autonomy](#)

What needs to be done to improve R&D investment?

Change governance structure: India needs to drive change in industrial structure, use trade policy to force competition between Indian firms, and drastically reform India's public research system.

Utilise talent: India has an abundance of talent. This is visible from the 100 top investors in R&D as two-thirds of them have R&D centres in India. Hence, India should train and expose fresh engineers.

Overall, India should raise the profile of investment in in-house R&D in each of the firms.

16. [The Express View on climate report: Shore up the defences](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**The Express View on climate report: Shore up the defences**" published in the **Indian Express** on **16th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About WMO report on sea level rise.

News: World Meteorological Organisation's (WMO) report on the impact of sea-level rise on global peace stirred debate in the UN Security Council. The report adds to the growing corpus of studies that underline the climate vulnerabilities of people living in low-lying areas.

What are the key highlights of the WMO report on sea level rise?

More than one in 10 people worldwide, including those in megacities like Mumbai, New York, London, Dhaka, Shanghai and Buenos Aires, could face severe turmoil even if global warming is miraculously limited to 1.5 degrees (Paris climate pact's goal).

Read more: [Sea level rise is certain](#)

What should be done to prevent and mitigate the impacts of WMO report on sea level rise?

The task for policymakers is to **prepare for massive social and economic dislocation**. This will require **building resilience** at several levels. This can be done by **a)** investing in R&D, infrastructure and warning systems to mitigate the loss of lives and property, **b)** Protecting coasts by engineering, technological and ecological interventions like creating physical barriers, permeable pavements, sopping waters and reviving mangroves, **c)** Armoured shorelines can also upset the delicate ecological balance of coastal habitats.

Read more: [Sea levels could rise by up to 2.8 feet in India, says govt](#)

Globally **technology and fund transfer commitments** at UN summits have to be in proportion to the gravity of the challenge.

17. [Shuffling feet: On foreign trade and policy responses](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Shuffling feet: On foreign trade and policy responses**" published in **The Hindu** on **17th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: changes in exports and imports

News: The article discusses the changing trends of export and import in India.

How has export and import been in India for 2023?

The exports from India got a disappointing start in 2023. Merchandise shipments fell 6.6% in January.

Engineering exports fell 10%; pharma products lost momentum along with 14 other products.

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However, **with the exports, even imports are also falling down.**

If this trend continues, **India's current account deficit** for 2022-23 will be lower than the projected CAD by most of the agencies.

What are the reasons behind slowing export and import?

The drop in imports suggests that **domestic demand growth is decreasing** while the decline in export is due to the **global economic slowdown.**

India's weaker trade balance for the fiscal year 2022-23 was due to the two reasons- **a)** a slowing world economy hurting exports and **b)** resilient domestic demand shoring up imports.

However, these reasons seem to be diminishing.

What is the way ahead?

Economic growth is expected to increase in the major economies.

For example, U.S. retail sales grew faster than expected in January and the U.K.-based trading businesses now expect an increase in the turnover this March.

These will bring opportunities for India's export markets. Therefore, industry bodies and the government must work together to help exporters and export grow by capturing these global opportunities.

[18. Use a clear compass to navigate our challenges and opportunities](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **"Use a clear compass to navigate our challenges and opportunities"** published in **Live mint** on **17th February 2023.**

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Socio-economic development

News- The article emphasizes the need to analyse the economic and geopolitical conditions affecting the world.

What is the present macroeconomic scenario around the world?

According to **World Bank projections,** the share of trade as a percentage of global GDP climbed from **roughly 25% in 1970** to **52% in 2020.**

Global value chains (GVCs) have grown and spread across the globe. Asia is expected to generate **\$22 trillion** in new wealth between 2020 and 2025.

In 2023, emerging markets will grow more than twice as quickly as developed markets, predicts **the IMF.**

What are the other events that have impacted the world?

Climate change is yet another phenomenon that has had an impact on not just the world economy, but also our entire society. The **decade from 2011 to 2020** has been the warmest on record.

It has become essential for nations to include climate change in all policy deliberations.

Digitalization has also strongly influenced all aspects of society which picked up steam after the pandemic struck.

How can India push for its interests in this situation?

Strategic integration with GVCs is one option. It can increase production by transferring information, investing in them and using international best practices.

India can benefit from **investing in climate-resilient and sustainable infrastructure.** According to a **World Bank analysis,** investing in more resilient infrastructure would produce an average net benefit of **\$4.2 trillion.**

The country has an opportunity to continuously expand their **own digital infrastructure.**

A significant digital payment platform in India, the **Unified Payments Interface (UPI),** has enrolled 376 banks and facilitated 7.3 billion transactions, with a total value of ₹11.9 trillion.

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What is the way forward?

India will soon have to deal with many of the **same issues** affecting the rest of the world, such as rising debt levels, inflation, food and energy crises, and geopolitical conflicts.

Overcoming obstacles in a changing external environment necessitates **deliberate action** across all socioeconomic domains.

It also necessitates a **mentality change** that accepts the certainty of change.

[19. Deep sea fish conservation must not go adrift](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Deep sea fish conservation must not go adrift**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment

Relevance: Conservation related issues

News- The article explains the need of deep sea fish conservation.

What is the judgement of SC on fishing in the high seas?

The **Supreme Court of India** has given permission to fishermen for using **purse seine fishing gear** to fish beyond territorial waters and within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Tamil Nadu. But, they have to observe certain restrictions.

It seems to be **more concerned about regulating fishing** with administrative and transparency measures than about the conservation measures and obligations which a coastal state owes in its EEZ under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.

What are the existing conventions related to conservation?

Under **Articles 56.1(a) and 56.1(b)(iii)** of **UNCLOS**, coastal states have **sovereign rights** to ensure that the living and non-living resources of the EEZ are used, conserved and managed. But, they should not be subject to overexploitation.

Access to the zone by foreign fleets is also solely within the coastal state’s discretion and subject to its laws and regulations.

In order to prevent overexploitation, coastal States must determine the **Total Allowable Catch (TAC)** in the EEZ in light of the best scientific evidence available.

Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna 1993 is another instrument. It focuses on TAC and distribution of allocations among the parties to the SBT. TAC and the catch quotas are aimed at putting sustainable use into practice among fishermen.

What are the international legal efforts in this regard?

There are several regional organisations that either prohibit the use of large drift nets or at least call for their prohibition. The examples are the **1989 Tarawa Declaration of the South Pacific Forum**.

The **United Nations General Assembly** passed **Resolutions 44/225 (1989) and 46/215 (1991)** supported and strengthened this development, calling for a moratorium on all large-scale pelagic drift net fishing vessels in high seas.

What needs to be looked by higher courts on fishing in the high seas?

The top court should seek guidance from the obligations arising from the multilateral and regional conventions which are meant to bring in sustainable fishing practices.

The Court’s final judgement needs to look into **non-selective fishing methods** by purse seiners. It results in the by-catch of other marine living species which could include endangered species. The guidance from the **Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna 1993 (SBT)** could have also been sourced by the top court to enable recovery of depleted fishing stocks.

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20. [Fasten Your Seatbelt, India – Air India’s huge order has multiple implications, for the airline, for civil aviation, for policy and for manufacturing. Here’s a deep dive](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Fasten Your Seatbelt, India – Air India’s huge order has multiple implications, for the airline, for civil aviation, for policy and for manufacturing. Here’s a deep dive**” published in **The Times of India** on **17th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the Indian aviation market.

News: Recently, the Tata Group, which acquired Air India, has placed an order for 470 new aircraft. This is the largest ever deal in aviation in India.

About the new deal for Air India

Read here: [Modi, Macron, Biden announce: 470 Airbus, Boeing planes for Air India](#)

Where does the deal offer Air India?

Domestic significance: Locally, Air India faces a formidable competitor from IndiGo which flies a fleet of 308 aircraft and has more than 55% of the market locked up.

There’s also a fast-growing competitor in Akasa, which has captured more than 2% of the market in five months since its launch.

Air India after combining four entities (the others are Air India Express, AIX Connect and Vistara) has a fleet of 220 aircraft with 26% of the market. Hence, the deal will enable Air India to engage in a complete fleet renewal coupled with significant expansion.

International significance: The deal will **a)** Match features of international airlines like Emirates, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, British Airways and Lufthansa and **b)** Enable Air India to enter, capture traffic flows and build foundations in markets such as Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and SAARC nations.

What does the deal offer for the Indian aviation market?

Over time, the Tata Group aims to bring commercial aircraft manufacturing into the country. If it was for Airbus, then the set-up of an assembly line will be their second assembly line in Asia after China. This would pave the way for boosting manufacturing and technology transfer agreements with Indian firms.

Note: *Boeing already has an existing joint venture with Boeing on the defence side.*

The deal will also help India to **a)** Forecast Indian aviation sector growth at a global level, **b)** Improve India’s economic growth prospects and geopolitical dynamics, and **c)** Help in leveraging geopolitical dynamics to provide a competitive edge for India’s international relations.

What should be done to improve the Indian aviation market?

The Indian aviation industry has two major challenges. **a)** India has a complex fleet infrastructure which challenges the seamless induction and deployment of mammoth aircraft orders, **b)** The deal does not provide adequate returns on capital unless there is a smooth deployment of aircraft. To overcome that, India needs policy changes to **develop airports as hubs, ensure proper air-traffic management, presence of adequate maintenance facilities and trained manpower.**

21. [Supreme Court must use cases pending against UAPA to examine its scope](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Supreme Court must use cases pending against UAPA to examine its scope**” published in **The Indian Express** on **17th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance: Measures adopted by government to deal with terrorism

News- In recent times, arbitrary use of India’s omnibus anti-terror law, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967 has drawn attention.

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What are the prominent anti-terror laws that have been used by the Indian government against terror activities?

Indian anti-terror laws include the **Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act** passed in 1985, and the **Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA)** passed in 2002.

In 2004, started **using UAPA** against the terror activities. The government used UAPA to declare illegal any organization questioning **India's sovereignty**.

Since then, the law has undergone **three significant revisions** — 2008, 2013 and 2019. Each modification has made it more stringent.

What are the problems associated with the legal approach adopted by the Indian government against terrorism?

The government has prosecuted **political dissidents** under anti-terror laws. But on the global stage, in 2022, India objected to the inclusion of “**right-wing extremism**” in the definition of terrorism in the **UNGA Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**.

There appears to be a significant difference between what India considers to be terrorism and what other democracies like the UK, US do. But Indian **anti-terror measures** were inspired by legislation from these countries and United Nations Security Council resolutions.

TADA and POTA were known for their **lengthy pretrial detention, in-custody torture, false prosecutions, and forced confessions**. Minority community members paid a heavy price.

What has been the stand of SC on anti-terror legislations?

The Supreme Court had evolved many safeguards for application of TADA and POTA.

In **Shaheen Welfare Association v Union of India, 1996**; it categorized TADA detainees into four different brackets to grant bail.

In **Kartar Singh v State of Punjab, 1994**; SC ordered setting up state and central review committees to prevent the misuse of TADA.

But in the UAPA era, the court has been unable to **provide adequate safeguards** against **arbitrary arrests, malicious prosecutions and long pretrial detentions**. The Court's ruling in **NIA v Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali (2020)** has made the grant of bail almost impossible.

What are issues related to UAPA?

Terms like “**terrorist act**”, “**unlawful activity**”, “**advocacy**”, “**conspiracy**”, “**likely to threaten**”, and “**likely to strike terror**” have been **framed vaguely**. These seem to give agencies arbitrary powers.

There is a lack of **standards for prosecution**. Instead, the act allows for a blind reliance on police cases. The terms like “terrorist act” are subjective and difficult to define.

UAPA has one of the worst records for prosecution success. According to a **PUCL report** in 2022, less than 3% of arrests made under the UAPA resulted in convictions between 2015 and 2020. Only 1,080 of the 4,690 people detained under the UAPA between 2018 and 2020 received bail.

What is the way forward for reforming UAPA?

The debate on UAPA needs to be taken **beyond the validity of a few select provisions**. The law's **purpose and scope** need careful examination. The main question is **proportionality** which is a **fundamental principle of our Constitution**.

The Court must determine whether the **breadth and consequences of UAPA** are substantially out of proportion to its declared goals.

There is a need to have a law that **effectively combat terrorism** and still conform to the **imperatives of our Constitution**. The ability to identify, neutralize, and bring terrorists to justice should be a priority.

However, the authorities must be subject to **stringent, clear controls and impartial oversight**.

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22. **Billionaire Raj: The rise of India's multi-business conglomerates**

Source– The post is based on the article “**Billionaire Raj: The rise of India's multi-business conglomerates**” published in the **Business Standard** on **18th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance: Wealth concentration

News- Recently, two announcements of the past few days grabbed attention. One was Tata-owned Air India's eye-popping order for 470 passenger planes. The second announcement was an investment commitment of about Rs 3.5 trillion by various business houses

How is the business being dominated by a few large firms in India?

Gautam Adani's companies run some of India's biggest ports, operate a **fifth of its power transmission lines, and accommodate a quarter of its commercial air traffic.**

Tata group's chairman recently mentioned investment plans totalling **\$90 billion for the next five years.**

Mukesh Ambani has made various pronouncements for **investments of about Rs 10 trillion.** His ambitions include producing a **fifth of the country's renewable energy.**

The **Rs 30-trillion investment** mentioned by just the Big Three equals a tenth of India's GDP. They account for 20% of the net profits of 3,250 out of India's listed, non-financial companies.

What can be concluded by increasing wealth concentrations in the hands of a few conglomerates?

The increasing concentration of mega investments is because of their **capital-intensive nature and the scale of the country's ambitions.**

The rise of **multi-business conglomerates** stands in contrast to the earlier rise of **focused, single-business enterprises** in telecom, IT services, pharmaceuticals, and automobiles.

The experience of South Korea, Japan, and Russia has shown, the **conglomerate model** often comes with political **connections.** But such comparisons can be overblown.

The six big groups have revenue equal to about 11% of India's GDP. Samsung alone accounts for more than that in South Korea.

23. **Social security and the story of two Budgets**

Source– The post is based on the article “**Social security and the story of two Budgets**” published in **The Hindu** on **18th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government schemes and interventions

Relevance: Socio-economic Welfare of vulnerable section

News- In Union Budget 2023-24, the finance minister asserted that since 2014, the central government has ensured a better quality of life, and a life of dignity for all its citizens. But Budget figures help distinguish rhetoric from the truth.

What are the issues with social security provisions provided by the central government?

Budgetary provisions– There have been severe cuts in various **social security and welfare schemes** such as food security and the MGNREGA in the budget.

Elderly and other social security pensioners are not given enough consideration.

Budget for the NSAP has remained constant, at approximately **₹9,000 crore.** It is steadily reducing in real terms. This year, the NSAP saw a reduction of ₹16 crore.

Low amount of pension-Failure to **index social sector expenditure to inflation** has led to the even greater marginalisation of vulnerable people. India's cumulative inflation rate from 2007 to 2023 is 193.19%. This means that ₹200 in 2007 would have become ₹586.38 in 2023 if indexed.

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Since 2007, social security pensions under the National Social Assistance Programme have remained frozen at a low of ₹200 for the elderly and ₹300 per month for widows and persons with disabilities.

Numbers receiving pensions– For selecting beneficiaries, the central government relies on the obsolete **Below Poverty Line lists based on Census 2001**.

