



9 PM

Compilation

27th Feb to 4th March 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. [Listen to the court – SC warning against renaming places by abusing history, and invoking it selectively, is valuable and timely](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“Plenty In A Name – Why naming public spaces after India’s rich flora, fauna, and not history figures, makes so much sense” published in **The Times of India** on **1st March 2023**.

“The Express View: Listen to the court” published in the **Indian Express** on **1st March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About renaming places.

News: The Supreme Court has recently dismissed a PIL that sought a renaming commission focussed on “ancient India”.

Note: *Immediately after Independence, to reverse colonial legacies India changed the names of several places*

About the case

A PIL has been filed and sought the Court’s intervention in restoring the “original names” of places “renamed by barbaric invaders”. The petitioner had contended that several roads, public places and cities in the country are named after “foreign looters” and argued that the “benevolent nature of Hinduism had resulted in wiping out of it from Pakistan and Afghanistan”.

However, the court dismissed the PIL and said that the “country cannot remain a prisoner of the past”. The bench criticised the petitioner for going by the playbook of those who “invoke history selectively” to create “schisms in society”.

Note: *European names were inserted into towns, cities and countries in several parts of the world during the so-called Age of Discovery in the 15th to 18th centuries. For instance, **Constantinople** was renamed as **Istanbul** in 1930.*

In recent times, such renaming exercises have become the stock-in-trade of the votaries of identity politics who obsess about “outsiders”, “invaders” and “looters”.

What is the significance of the SC’s comment?

The apex court reaffirmed the “**rule of law, secularism and constitutionalism**” and cautioned against bigotry. The court’s directive to abide by “the principle of fraternity enshrined in the Constitution’s Preamble” and its words of caution against the abuse of history must be heard.

Why India should revamp the philosophy of naming or renaming places after history?

India is expected to add another 416 million people to its cities by 2050, taking the urban population share to 50%. This will be associated with major infrastructure expansion. Each new project, street, or square will need a new name. So, India has to revamp the philosophy of naming.

Words have power, and names can act as economic multipliers. For instance, US data indicates homes on ‘Lake’ streets average 16% more than the national median home value.

What should be done while naming or renaming places?

Follow global protocol: Top airports around the world and most have straightforward geographical titles. For instance, Amsterdam, Beijing, Dubai, Incheon, Los Angeles, and Munich. Similarly, in many countries, streets are named by their simple number and direction. All of this is both user-friendly and conflict-reducing.

Can pay homage to nature: Singapore Changi Airport has been permitted to be named after a legendary tree, and around 300-odd streets named after Oak in California. India can follow similar approach.

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Name after famous personalities: Public spaces can be named after popular figures from arts, entertainment and sport in the contemporary world.

2. [Supreme Court censure on renaming games: Because the past lives in the present](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Supreme Court censure on renaming games: Because the past lives in the present”** published in the **Indian Express** on **2nd March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About renaming places.

News: The Supreme Court has recently dismissed a PIL that sought a renaming commission focussed on “ancient India”.

About the case and renaming places after history

Must read: [Listen to the court – SC warning against renaming places by abusing history, and invoking it selectively, is valuable and timely](#)

Why terming medieval rulers as “invaders” and “outsiders” is wrong?

Firstly, during medieval times, kings and sultans were not accountable for their actions. These were times when hierarchies were held as important for “social cohesion” and statecraft had very different objectives. Wars and violence were often critical to empire-building.

Secondly, the history is too complex to be captured in binaries. For instance, Aurangzeb revoked many of the policies of his forefathers. He imposed Sharia laws, brought back the discriminatory jizya tax that Hindus had to pay in return for protection and gave orders to destroy Hindu shrines in some parts of his empire.

On the other hand, there were more Hindus in the higher echelons during Aurangzeb’s rule than any other Great Mughal. He had Rajput relatives, and gave grants for maintaining Hindu temples.

Thirdly, the colonial regime periodised India’s past into Hindu rule, Muslim rule and British rule. This is evident from James Mill’s History of India. His book categorises Mahmud of Ghazni, Ibrahim Lodhi, Aurangzeb and Tipu Sultan as the invader. His book had a significant impact on the country’s education system for most of the colonial period.

General

Studies

Paper – 2

General Studies - 2

1. [Explained | Menstrual leave and its global standing](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Explained | Menstrual leave and its global standing**” published in **The Hindu** on **27th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice

Relevance: issues associated with menstrual policies

News: The Supreme Court has refused to entertain a PIL that sought menstrual leave for workers and students across the country. According to the petition filed, the lack of menstrual leave in certain States is a violation of Article 14.

What is Menstrual leave?

Menstrual leave or period leave refers to all policies that allow employees or students to take time off when they are experiencing menstrual pain or discomfort.

At the workplace, it refers to policies that allow for both paid or unpaid leave, or time for rest.

What are the problems associated with menstrual cycle?

Most women experience a menstrual cycle of 28 days, and a normal cycle may vary from 23 to 35 days. The cycle leads to **period pain (dysmenorrhea)** for some of the women.

This pain lasts for a couple of days a month for some and for others the pain hampers daily activities and productivity.

It was estimated **that employees lost around 8.9 days’ worth of productivity** every year due to menstrual-cycle related issues.

Hence, menstrual leave policies are needed to allow leave to women. However, there are different stands on the need of the policy.

What are the different views on menstrual policy?

People supporting policy argue that menstruation is a biological process and **women should not be discriminated** against it in educational institutions and workplace.

However, others argue that menstrual leaves policies are not required because it will lead to **discrimination against women** by the employers.

What kind of menstrual leave policies are in place globally?

Spain: Spain recently became the first European country to grant paid menstrual leave to workers.

Japan: Japan introduced menstrual leave as part of labour law in 1947. However, as per a recent study, less than 0.9% of the women had actually taken leave.

Indonesia: It introduced a policy in 1948 which said that workers experiencing menstrual pain are not obliged to work on the first two days of their cycle.

Philippines: Workers are permitted two days of menstrual leave a month.

Taiwan: It has an Act of Gender Equality in Employment. The act says employees have the right to request a day off as period leave every month, at half their regular wage.

There are other countries that allow menstrual leave like the United Kingdom, South Korea, Zambia, China and Wales. **Private Companies like Nike and Coexist** have introduced menstrual leave as an internal policy.

However, the U.S does not have a formal menstrual leave policy.

What attempts are being made in India?

Private Companies: Companies like Zomato, Swiggy, Byjus have brought menstrual leave policies.

State governments: Bihar and Kerala are the only states to introduce menstrual leave to women. Recently, the Kerala government has also announced that the State’s Higher Education department will now grant menstrual and maternity leaves for students in universities.

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Parliamentary measures: The measures taken in the Parliament have been mostly unsuccessful.

For example, The **Menstruation Benefits Bill, 2017** was introduced in the Parliament but was disregarded as an unclean topic. Later, the **Women's Sexual, Reproductive and Menstrual Rights Bill** was introduced in 2018 but wasn't approved.

However, again **The Right of Women to Menstrual Leave and Free Access to Menstrual Health Products Bill, 2022** will be introduced in the Parliament.

It provides for three days of paid leave for women and transwomen during the period of menstruation. It also seeks to extend the benefit for students. As per the Bill, around 40 percent of girls miss school during their periods.

2. The council and caste – Caste discrimination becomes a political battle in the US

Source: The post is based on an article **“The council and caste – Caste discrimination becomes a political battle in the US”** published in **Business Standard** on **27th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Effect of Policies & Politics of Developed & Developing Countries on India's Interests.

Relevance: protecting caste in the US

News: [Seattle](#) has become the first US city to ban caste discrimination after its local council voted to add caste to the city's anti-discrimination laws.

What are the implications of this measure?

Some Indian-Americans argue discrimination on the basis of descent or ethnicity is already illegal in many parts of the US and specifying caste focuses more on Indians or Hindus.

Moreover, two different groups of critics have emerged:

First or the right-wing in India sees this attack on caste as essentially an insult to India or to religious practices.

Second group worries that the addition of caste into the law might **reduce the attractiveness of Indians and Indian-Americans to companies in the US** because US corporations fear lawsuits more than anything.

They also fear that caste discrimination **might become ground for action in court**. There are already few cases going in the court. **For example**, one Dalit engineer is suing Cisco for discrimination on the basis of caste.

Hence, this kind of cases might affect Indian-Americans in getting job in the US companies.

What is the way ahead?

Even though there are issues with protecting caste in the US, it is a fact that caste discrimination exists everywhere. Therefore, it should not find a place in the US also and it must be treated on a par with racial and gender discrimination.

3. Shiv Sena debacle must stand as an important lesson

Source– The post is based on the article **“Shiv Sena debacle must stand as an important lesson”** published in **The Indian Express** on **27th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Salient Features of the Representation of People's Act.

Relevance: Issues relating to political parties

News- Recently, the ECI recognised the Eknath Shinde faction as the Shiv Sena and ordered that the party name “Shiv Sena” and the bow and arrow symbol should be retained by it.

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What are the statutory provisions for deciding the disputes relating to control of parties between rival groups in the party?

As per **Section 15 of the Symbols Order, 1968**, “There may be rival groups of a recognised political party and each of them may claim to be that party. Then, the Commission may decide that one such rival section is that recognised party. The decision of the Commission **shall be binding.**”

Using the power under this Section, the ECI applies the **test of majority support** among the members of the “**organisational and legislature wings**” of the party to decide the dispute.

In its very first test in 1969, EC had used this formula. This was upheld by the Supreme Court in its judgement in **Sadiq Ali v. Election Commission of India, 1971** and in several subsequent judgments.

What was the basis of ECI judgement in Shiv Sena case?

The Commission relied on the **test of majority**. The Shinde faction was able to prove that it had the support of a majority of MLAs and MPs.

The EC found that it could not rely on the test of majority in the organisational wing of the party as claims of numerical majority by both factions were not satisfactory.

As per EC, the “**Test of Party Constitution**” could not be relied upon. The party had not submitted a copy of its amended constitution in 2018 and the document had become more undemocratic after amendment.

What is the significance of inner-party democracy in regard to this case?

In the Shiv Sena order, the EC underlines the lack of **inner-party democracies** in political parties. It said it was the root cause of many of the cases that came before it.

The **Representation of People Act** requires that political parties have a **written constitution**. They should submit an undertaking stating that the constitution is **democratic and promotes inner-party democracy**.

The present Shiv Sena debacle is an important lesson to all the other parties of India.

4. Reducing pain: On menstrual leave

Source: The post is based on the article “**Reducing pain: On menstrual leave**” published in **The Hindu** on **27th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About menstrual pain leave.

News: Supreme Court of India directed a petitioner to approach the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development to frame a policy on menstrual pain leave.

About the case and the observations of the Supreme Court on menstrual pain leave?

A petition has sought the Court’s direction to States to frame rules for granting menstrual pain leave for students and working women. The court in response observed that the biological process must not become a “disincentive” for employers offering jobs to women.

However, the challenges of granting menstrual pain leave include reinforcing negative gender stereotypes and increasing the existing stigma.

What is the status of menstrual pain leave in India and abroad?

In India, **Kerala and Bihar** have menstrual pain leave; the food delivery app **Zomato** has also introduced it.

Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Spain and Zambia have this policy included in labour laws.

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What should be done to ensure gender equality?

The government should **pay attention to immediate issues** such as the lack of sanitation facilities in schools and at the workplace, especially in the informal sector.

According to World Bank data, between 2010 and 2020 the percentage of working women dropped from 26% to 19%. Hence, the government should **provide access to higher education and more opportunities for women.**

Many countries are trying out **four-day work days for a quality life**, while others are **offering paternity leave** so that parenting can be equally shared and ensure employers do not see recruiting women as a disadvantage. All constraints on the road to gender equality and equity must be addressed.

5. [Nari shakti' offers G20 nations a women's empowerment model](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Nari shakti' offers G20 nations a women's empowerment model”** published in **Live Mint** on **28th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice

Relevance: women empowerment

News: The article discusses the way India has led the empowerment of women and which can act as a model to showcase India's efforts to G20 nations.

What are the different measures taken by India to empower women?

Nari Shakti Scheme: It funds women entrepreneurs by providing soft loans.

Women in Engineering Science and Technology (WEST) programme: It encourages women pursuing education in STEM subjects.

Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP): It is a unified access portal that brings together an ecosystem for women.

Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP): It has funded over 107,000 women entrepreneurs between 2016 and 2021. In addition, the government has mandated targeted procurement from women entrepreneurs.

Legislation: There law in India provides for reserving one-third of the seats for women in gram panchayats, panchayat samitis, zilla parishads, municipalities and municipal corporations.

Around 21 states have mandated 50% representation which has helped create local-level ecosystems for uplifting women and encouraging women's participation in economic activities.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs): They have also contributed to women's development.

Corporate sectors: The women workforce in corporate sectors have improved tremendously. For example, banking and finance services (31%), media sector (30%), IT services (34%-46%).

Women entrepreneurs: There are more than 20% of proprietary MSME units run by women in India. The accessibility to the internet has further increased female entrepreneurship in the country.

Hence, these all efforts and measures taken by India can be a model for other G20 nations.

What more can be done by India to ensure women's empowerment?

There is a need to focus on three critical areas: **a)** women in STEM, **b)** women-led enterprises and **c)** women at the grassroots level.

These will have a huge impact on women's development and will help G20 economies reduce gender gaps and inequality, as envisaged under the UN Sustainable Development Agenda.

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6. Cooperation amid conflict is India's burden for G20

Source– The post is based on the article “Cooperation amid conflict is India's burden for G20” published in **The Indian Express** on **1st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance: India approach towards multilateralism in changing global order

News- The inability of the G20 finance ministers to agree on a joint statement last week points to an important reality about multilateralism.

What is the history of multilateralism?

When great powers are at peace with each other, **multilateralism** has reasonable chances of success. But when they are in conflict with each other, there is less scope for global cooperation. Multilateral institutions like the G20 need at least a **minimal understanding** among the major powers on the **global rules** for being functional.

Such an understanding was not there during the Cold War except in a few areas like nuclear arms control.

The **Soviet Union collapse** in 1991 opened doors for an **expansive phase of multilateralism** for nearly a quarter of a century. There was **great power cooperation** at the UN or in the creation of the WTO.

During the **financial crisis of 2008**, the Bush administration rallied the top 20 economies of the world to stabilise the global economy.

That type of cooperation among nations no longer exists. There is **no consensus on key issues** in G20 today.

How multilateralism is facing troubles in recent times?

The **political conflict between Russia and the West** is growing with the Ukraine war. There are chances that Washington and Beijing might engage in **arm conflict over Taiwan**.

The rising **geopolitical conflict** has repercussions for the **economic domain**. In the last few years, There has been **diminishing faith in globalisation and active weaponization of interdependence** for particular national objectives.

The new economic conflict has also entered the realm of **emerging technologies — especially the digital domain**. It promises to **reshape the global economy** as well as **restructure the nature of military power** in the international system.

How can India successfully manage its G20 presidency?

There is little possibility that the current military, political and economic tensions between the major powers can be mitigated any time soon.

Reducing the negative impact of the **renewed great power conflict** on the G20 in itself will be a **diplomatic achievement** for India.

Delhi's **multilateral diplomacy** cannot stand apart from the **great power conflict**. India is very much part of the **renewed great power rivalry**. There are deep differences between Delhi and Beijing on **multilateral issues**.

What is the current status of India relations with major powers?

China has blocked India's efforts to join the **Nuclear Suppliers Group**. Beijing does not support Delhi's quest for a **permanent seat on the UN Security Council**.

There is also growing friction in a range of new areas. India rejected China's **Belt and Road Initiative** when it was unveiled in 2017. It did not join the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership**.

Beijing helped Pakistan to put the Kashmir question back on the **active agenda of the UNSC** in 2019. Yet, India continues to have a presence with China in various forums like the RIC, BRICS and SCO. It is also a member of the China-led AIIB.

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India has **deepened bilateral strategic ties** with the US and Europe. Delhi has also revived the **Quad forum** with Australia, Japan and the US. The Quad is now one of India's premier **multilateral forums**.

What has been the approach of the Indian foreign policy establishment towards multilateralism?

In the past, India seemed to focus on just **one kind of multilateralism — the UN and the NAM**. Delhi now participates in **multiple kinds of multilateral institutions**. The UN remains an important focus for India.

A less universal coalition like the G20 is important for multilateralism but is also quite **vulnerable to geopolitics**.

Delhi also participates in **groupings of “like-minded countries” such as the Quad** in the pursuit of national and regional interests. India is also a regular invitee to the **G7 forum** of advanced industrial democracies.

It is also actively trying to reactivate its past coalition with the Global South. Delhi approached the FATF to put some real pressure on Pakistan.

How are the foreign policy options for India in complex global order?

India can't simply turn its back on China. Its **growing economic and military weight** makes it a **powerful player in the international system**. Nor can it ignore Russia, which has just reminded the world of its enormous capacity to **disrupt the global order**.

Delhi has no option but to try and **cooperate with its adversaries** to solve larger regional and global problems.

At the same time, national interests demand that India **compete with its rivals and collaborate with like-minded countries** in the multilateral domain.

The **relative mix of cooperation and contestation** depends on the **context and the nature of the specific issue** at hand.

7. [The middle path for India in the new world disorder](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“The middle path for India in the new world disorder”** published in **The Hindu** on **1st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance: India foreign policy choices in changing global order

News- International politics is undergoing major changes. A new world order is emerging.

What is the shape of current world order?

The U.S. still remains the world's **most powerful military power**. But the U.S.'s ability to **shape geopolitical outcomes** is clearly in decline. It was seen in its withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 years of war or the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

These changes actually **leave the world in a flux**. There's a lack of clarity on which direction the world is headed. It makes policy making harder for **middle powers like India**.

Even if a new cold war breaks out between the U.S. and China, **the global order** is unlikely to be bipolar.

During the Cold War, the world was divided into two ideologies and two systems. Today's world is much **more diverse ideologically and integrated economically**.

What are the foreign policy challenges faced by India in recent times?

India faces an entirely new set of challenges in the **new global disorder**. The arena of the looming **U.S.-China great power contest** is Asia. It is **unfolding right in India's neighbourhood**.

During the Cold War, India didn't have **hostile relations with any of the opposing superpowers**. Today, India would be tempted to join the American bloc as it faces the China

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problem. There is a **convergence of interests** between India and the U.S. when it comes to China.

The **power imbalance** between India and China has widened in recent years. China has also developed a **strategic partnership with Pakistan**. It is **raising its influence in other South Asian and Indian Ocean countries**. Besides, the border situation is hostile after the Galwan incident.

But Russia's invasion of Ukraine has complicated India's options further.

Russia is a **traditional partner** with which India has deep defence ties. India is under huge pressure from its partners to take a more **critical position on Russia's actions**.

Besides, India also worries that the West's move to **isolate Russia** in Europe would push the country further into the **Chinese embrace**. Any policy decisions should factor in these delicate changes under way in global politics.

What is the way forward for Indian foreign policy establishment?

India should prepare itself for a **prolonged strategic competition** with China. India could perhaps learn a lesson from what China did in the 1970s.

The Soviet Union was **China's ideological brother and neighbour**. It broke away from the Soviet communist fold and built a **quasi alliance with the U.S.** It helped the **'imperialist bloc'** to defeat the Soviet communists.

Once it acquired enough **economic and military power**, China started gradually challenging the U.S.

India's primary focus should be on **transforming itself economically and militarily**. It should stay focussed on its rise and **bridging the gap with China**. It should present itself as a **natural stabilising power in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region**.

However, China is not the only problem India faces. In **continental Asia**, India sees a different set of challenges, especially after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban's return to power.

India has to address its **continental security challenges** and manage its inroads into Central Asia. For this, India has to work with **Eurasian powers such as Russia and Iran**. Both of which are at odds with the U.S.

So, abandoning its **strategic autonomy** and **joining a U.S.-led bloc** would limit India's options in the new world. It will also provoke China. An open conflict with China doesn't serve India's **strategic interests**.

There could be many power centres in the new world order. India should opt for **multi-engagement not multi-alignment** as some experts have suggested for a multipolar world. It should aim to create **new pillars of the new order by engagement and partnership with middle powers**.

8. [International courts and climate change](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“International courts and climate change”** published in **The Hindu** on **1st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance: Legal issues related to climate change

News- A group of 16 countries led by Vanuatu seeks an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the issue of climate change.

What are the various jurisdictions of ICJ? The ICJ has two types of jurisdictions: **contentious and advisory**.

Contentious jurisdiction– It refers to **resolving legal disputes** between consenting states,

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Advisory jurisdiction– Under it, the UN General Assembly, the Security Council and other specialised bodies of the UN can request the ICJ for an **opinion on a legal question**.

Unlike contentious jurisdiction, the ICJ's advisory opinions are **non-binding**. Yet, they carry **normative weight** and clarify international law on a relevant issue.

What are the legal opinions sought by Vanuatu from in its draft resolution?

First, what are the **international law obligations of countries** toward the protection of the climate system from anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases?

ICJ will not only **interpret and clarify the existing international climate change law** but also use the **general and customary international law** to fill the gaps in these treaties. Thus, the ICJ can use the 'no-harm' principle.

Second, what are the **legal consequences for states** that have caused significant harm to the climate system, the SID states and other people of the present and future generations?

This question seeks to determine the price that states should pay for not honouring their **international legal obligations on climate change**. As part of **climate justice**, there is a long-standing demand for **climate reparations**.

The rich countries have historically caused maximum greenhouse gas emissions. They should **compensate developing countries** that are disproportionately impacted by climate change.

They have sought the advisory opinion of the **International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)**.

ITLOS has been requested to determine the **specific obligations** of the countries under the **UN Convention on the Law of the Sea** about **preventing and reducing pollution of the marine environment**. The challenges of ocean warming, sea level rise and ocean acidification are all linked to the marine environment.

What should be the approach of the international community towards the advisory jurisdiction of ICJ on climate change?

These advisory opinions are not a panacea. They may even turn out to be **double edged swords** depending on the kind of verdict delivered.

The **role of international courts** should be welcomed. Developed countries and groupings like the G-20 should support these laudable initiatives of the SID states.

Environment and climate sustainability are important themes of G-20. India, as the president of the G-20, should take a lead given its relentless emphasis on **LiFE campaign**.

9. On regulating online sale of drugs in India

Source: The post is based on an article **"On regulating online sale of drugs in India"** published in **The Hindu** on **1st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: regulating e-pharmacies

News: The Ministry of Health has issued a show cause notice to pharmacy companies selling medicines online. The Health Minister has also said that e-pharmacies should be closed down.

Is banning e-pharmacies a viable option?

E-pharmacies flourished during the covid pandemic in the year 2020 where the need for home delivery of medicine was felt. The Ministry of Home affairs at that time issued orders to continue to operate.

The customers availing the benefits of online deliveries have also increased with the years.

Therefore, **banning e-pharmacies is not a viable** option because there is a possibility that some of these businesses will go underground if banned.

Hence, instead of banning, **regulating them is a viable option**.

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What measures have been taken by the government to regulate e-pharmacy?

The **draft e-pharmacy rules were brought by the Ministry of Health in 2018.**

The rules were finalised, public comments were taken into consideration and they were ready to be notified.

However, when draft rules were referred to a Group of Ministers, the matter was considered sensitive due to political reasons.

Hence, despite orders from multiple courts to regulate e-pharmacies, the government had not notified the regulations.

How are e-pharmacies competing with offline pharmacies?

There has been tough competition between e-pharmacies and offline chemist shops due to the low profit margin over medicines.

Therefore, in order to reduce competition, **online pharmacies have started to buy big and small wholesale drug distributors.** They have also started to open their pharmacy shops.

However, **e-pharmacies have also witnessed loss since 2015.** It was the year when e-pharmacies came up in the market.

Moreover, looking at the online pharmacy companies, even **offline chemist shops** have started to offer home delivery options to their customers by introducing their own store apps.

They even give customers options to order medicines over WhatsApp.

What can be the course of action?

Looking at the demand, it is not viable to completely ban e-pharmacies. Therefore, the best option is to regulate them by bringing up laws.

10.No method in the madness – A new critique of the V-Dem democracy rankings highlights where the problem lies

Source: The post is based on an article “**No method in the madness – A new critique of the V-Dem democracy rankings highlights where the problem lies**” published in **Business Standard** on **1st March 2023.**

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Governance**

Relevance: Issues associated with ranking of India in V-Dem Report.

News: Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) releases Democracy Report every year. It has consistently degraded India’s ranking for the past few years in its report.

What are the reasons behind downgrading the rank of India by V-Dem?

India was ranked 93 out of 140 countries in the Democracy Report, 2022.

V-Dem rankings are based on five sub-indices, namely, **1) elected officials, 2) universal suffrage, 3) clean elections, 4) freedom of association, and 5) freedom of expression.**

The first two criteria (**elected officials and universal suffrage**) are scored on the basis of an **analysis of the constitutions** of the countries being ranked. Hence, if the constitution of a country claims it “elects” its officials, it gets a perfect score.

India falls short of a perfect score because till 2021 two Lok Sabha MPs were “**selected**” (two representatives of the Anglo-Indian community) and **not elected.**

However, this law was repealed in 2021, but still becomes the reason for V-Dem to give India a less than perfect score under this head in 2022.

The remaining three parameters (**clean elections, freedom of association, and freedom of expression**) are ranked purely with the help of scientific experts.

Political science experts judge a democracy on their own parameters. Therefore, there may be variations about a knowledgeable expert’s views on Indian democracy.

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It may be subject to individual political, ideological or personal biases. **For example**, India's rating on clean elections has fallen from 3.6 to 2.3 since 2014 despite free and fair elections conducted by the Election Commission.

This shows that there are flaws with the choices of indicators, unexplainable decisions, and vulnerability to expert biases in the V-Dem Report.

What measures can be taken by India to improve its ranking?

First, it should engage with V-Dem to modify its methodology so that it is truly reflective of trends in Indian democracy.

Second, it must evolve its own standards on how democracy must be ranked in a diverse and multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and pluralistic society like India.

11. Phasing out the line, 'math is not for a girl'

Source– The post is based on the article **“Phasing out the line, ‘math is not for a girl’”** published in **The Hindu** on **2nd March 2023**.

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

Relevance: Gender issues in education field

News- The representation of females in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics or other math intensive fields and careers remains is not desirable.

What is the status of girls' performance in maths?

Boys outperform girls in mathematics significantly, which has been persistent over time. But, there is a considerable variation.

In the **north Indian States** of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, boys outperform girls substantially. In **south India**, girls outperform boys in Mathematics.

What are the reasons behind less representation of girls in the field of maths?

There is a tendency to attribute these disparities to **differences in ability**. It does not acknowledge the impact of **social and cultural norms**.

Girls are found to perform better in some southern States. It implies that inherent ability is not responsible for this difference.

There is a widespread prevalence of the **systematic devaluation of girls** related to their mathematical aptitude in the classroom, at home, and in society. This is reflective of **stereotypes** related to girls.

How public policy recognises the discrimination faced by girls in enrolling and continuing their school?

The **National Education Policy 2020** acknowledges the need to address several **gender gaps** in schooling. It stresses the need to implement **gender-sensitive training** for teachers. It calls for establishing a **'Gender -Inclusive Fund' for States** to utilise in implementing community based interventions.

Similarly, the **National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Care** also acknowledges these **gender disparities**.

How underrepresentation of girls in the field of mathematics is neglected by policy documents?

However, neither of these documents explicitly recognises the **causes and consequences of gender differences** in mathematics learning at early ages.

It is not that these gaps and mechanisms are unknown to the educational administration and policymakers. It was recognised in the position paper on the **“Teaching of Mathematics” published by the NCERT in 2005**.

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The paper talks about poorer outcomes for girls in mathematics through the **devaluation of girls in society**. It also discusses classroom research, indicating how **gendered perceptions and the behaviour** of teachers might negatively impact the performance of girls in maths.

What is the way forward to remove discrimination against girls in the field of mathematics?

Targeted behavioural interventions can curb the gender stereotyping of “math is not for a girl” at the household, societal, and school levels.

References to female mathematicians should be made in textbooks, female names, and characters in word problems.

There is a need to provide **exposure to female role models in STEM fields** in the course curriculum.

12. [G20: India's platform for global leadership](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**G20: India's platform for global leadership**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Global Groupings and Agreements affecting India's interests.

Relevance: Development related to G20

News- India recently hosted the meeting of the G20 finance minister as its current chair.

Why does the G20 seem to be in a deadlock?

Foreign Ministers of Japan and South Korea declined to attend the Delhi meet. Russia, China and the EU publicly stuck to their **differing positions on the war in Ukraine**.

For the first time ever, the group **could not agree on an outcome document** in a recent meeting of foreign ministers.

India found itself in an **uneasy situation**. It was not able to explain whether it supported its own **Chair's summary**. The summary noted that the majority of states condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and rejected the use or the **threat of use of nuclear weapons**.

India has reservations about calling **Mr. Putin's invasion of Ukraine a war at all**. India wanted the conflict to be **referred to as a crisis**.

There was little time left for discussions on **debt restructuring and cryptocurrency regulation**.

Why should India take a stand on Russia's invasion of UKRaine at president of G20?

Condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not about supporting the United States or **encouraging NATO expansion**. It is about **upholding the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity** enshrined in the UN Charter.

These are also the same principles that India has relied on for international support in the four wars that it has fought since independence.

The concern is **global**. This is **not just a European problem**. The war has **affected oil and gas prices, exacerbated inflation and disrupted global food supplies and prices**.

Further, it has escalated **nuclear risks**. There is a big threat to Ukraine's nuclear power plants, all five of which have come under direct shelling this past year.

If war continues for a longer time, Russia will be weaker due to **sanctions and isolation by developed economies**. It will become **more dependent on China**. The irony of India not taking sides means that it is helping Russia become a **client state of China**.

India played a vital role last year in **reaching consensus at the Bali summit**. It would be a tragedy if India is not able to do so at New Delhi.

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13. [Our Health, Our Data – Digital models for disease tracking are crucial. But so are data analytic skills & privacy protection](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Our Health, Our Data – Digital models for disease tracking are crucial. But so are data analytic skills & privacy protection**” published in **The Times of India** on **2nd March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About public health surveillance.

News: Bill Gates recently mentioned the importance of effective public health surveillance and early warning systems in forestalling future pandemics.

About public health surveillance in India

Public health surveillance helps in the identification, collation and analysis of disease occurrence. It is the **bedrock of national healthcare architecture**.

In India, a watershed moment in public health was the outbreak of plague in Surat in 1994. The plague catalysed the creation of the **National Apical Advisory Committee in 1995**.

This was followed by the **Integrated Disease Surveillance Project in 2004** and the **Integrated Health Information Platform in 2019**.

What are the present opportunities to improve public health surveillance in India?

Developments over the last two years indicate that over the next decade, digital identifiers and integrated systems will greatly expand the surveillance footprint. The unique health identifiers (UHID) for individuals and their Aadhaar data can help in improving public health surveillance in India.

These will help in **creating electronic health records**. These records will span private-sector healthcare providers and **can be integrated with public disease surveillance programmes**.

What are the challenges in creating public health surveillance in India?

-Public health institutions tracking disease occurrence based on data generated by states are the primary disease surveillance arms. But the **state’s performance so far has been less optimal** as they often function in silos.

-Over the next decade, **having adequate skilled personnel in public health surveillance** may be a bigger challenge.

For instance, **WHO’s International Health Regulations** are binding on members. The regulations cover chemical agents and radioactive materials. This shortage of skills is a big challenge in enforcing them.

-Health risks are no longer confined to infectious diseases.

-Digital models aren’t regulated by a robust personal data protection bill. Further, health data is sensitive and anecdotal evidence suggests that voluntary dimensions to rules on UHID are often violated.

What should be done to improve public health surveillance in India?

a) Digital models should be used to bring far-reaching changes in public health surveillance by expanding sources of data collation to the private sector, **b)** Public health surveillance can suffer a setback in the absence of adequate data security. Hence, the government should frame a proper data protection framework.

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14. Positing India's stand on the Ukraine war

Source– The post is based on the article “**Positing India's stand on the Ukraine war**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance: India and Ukraine crisis

News- Recently, UNGA adopted a resolution, calling for an end to the war. The resolution was favoured by 141 members and opposed by seven, while 32 states abstained. India was one among the 32.

What is the Indian position on the Ukraine crisis?

India has refused to **condemn Russia** for the invasion. It has refused to **join the West's sanctions**.

It has stepped up buying Russian fuel at a discounted price, and has consistently **abstained from UN votes** on the war.

What is the viewpoint of the west on the Ukraine war?

This is a **global crusade for democracy**. The war by an authoritarian Russia is a **challenge to global democracy**.

To save global democracy, the rules-based order and international law, all democratic states should take a position against Russia and **join the western coalition**.

Is this a battle between democracies and autocracies?

An overwhelming majority of nations have supported **UNGA resolutions** calling for the war to be brought to an end. But beyond the UN votes, the U.S. has hardly managed to **mobilise democracies** outside its **traditional western alliance system** against Russia.

India and South Africa, large democracies from Asia and Africa, have consistently **abstained from votes** at the UN. They have refused to **join the sanctions** because the sanctions were **unilateral, and without UN approval**.

Even some countries that are part of the **western alliance system like Israel and Turkey** are reluctant to join the west. Most of these countries see the war as a **European problem** between two former Soviet countries with its roots going back to the **end of the Cold War**.

For them, it is less about global democracy than the **post-Cold War security architecture in Europe**.

Why western claims of morality in the Ukraine war seem to be dubious?

There is no doubt here that Russia has **violated the sovereignty of Ukraine**. Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territories is a **clear violation of international laws**.

But a key dilemma before any country in international relations is **clash between moral positions and national interests**.

For the U.S. and much of Europe, there is a **convergence of their moral positions and foreign policy objectives** in the case of the Ukraine war. The U.S. wants to **“weaken” Russia**. So, the moral line they take **serves their strategic purpose**.

However, this position was violated when there were **clashes between values and interests**.

In 2003, the U.S. launched its illegal invasion of Iraq, violating the country's sovereignty. In 2011, NATO turned a **UNSC resolution** to establish a no fly zone in Libya into a full scale invasion. Right now, the U.S. has illegally placed its troops in Syria.

Israel has illegally **annexed East Jerusalem and Syria's Golan Heights**. The U.S. has recognised **Israel's annexation of Golan and moved its embassy to Jerusalem**.

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What ties with Russia are important for India?

Ties with Russia are important for India in many ways. One important area is **energy**. Discounted fuel from Russia is a relief for India. It meets over **80% of its fuel needs** through imports.

Defence ties are also important, Russia has fulfilled over **46% of India's defence needs** in the last five years. There is a sound argument that India should **diversify its source of defence imports**, but such a change would take time.

Russia is **deepening its ties with China**, which is India's main competitor. India should **retain its leverage** over Russia.

To manage its **continental interests**, India has to work with **powers in the Eurasian landmass**. The U.S. is practically absent, especially after its disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. Russia plays a key role in **India's continental foreign policy**.

What should be India's diplomatic stand on the Ukraine crisis?

Neither the **weakening of Russia nor the destruction of Ukraine** is in its interests. India wants an immediate end to the war and a **new security equilibrium** between great powers.

It will **stabilise the global economy** and the world could focus on more pressing problems from climate change to UN reforms.

India should stick to its **pragmatic neutrality, rooted in realism**. It should continue to push for a **practical solution to the Ukraine crisis**.

15. [South Asia's human capital is the resilience it needs](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**South Asia's human capital is the resilience it needs**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Regional groupings

Relevance: Development issues related to South Asia

News- Pandemics, economic slumps and extreme weather events have undermined the developmental gains in South Asia since 2020.

What is the human capital advantage of South Asia?

South Asia's people are its biggest asset. The region enjoys a **high demographic dividend**.

It has **nearly half its population under the age of 24** and over one million young people set to enter the labour force every month until 2030.

What are the human capital related challenges faced by South Asia?

South Asia is also home to **over one third of the world's stunted children**. A child born in the region today is expected to attain only 48% of their full productive potential by the age of 18.

South Asian governments on average spend **just 1% of GDP on health and 2.5% on education**.

In comparison, the global average is 5.9% on health and 3.7% on education.

COVID-19 pandemic further pushed an **additional 35 million people across South Asia** into extreme poverty. It has dealt an **unprecedented blow to the region's human capital**.

Pandemic has led to rise in **learning poverty**. Around the world, on average, schools remained closed for between 2020 and 2022 **for 141 days**. But, in South Asia they were **shut for 225 days**.

It increased South Asia's learning poverty from 60% to 78%. The **poorest and most vulnerable** people fell further behind. For example, in Bangladesh, the poorest students lost 50% more in terms of learning than the richest students.

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What is the way forward to improve human capital in South Asia?

There is a need for **well designed and implemented interventions**. They can make a difference if governments act fast. Recent evidence suggests that **even simple and low- cost education programmes** can lead to sizable gains in skills.

In Bangladesh, for example, attending a **year of additional preschool** through two- hour sessions significantly improved literacy, numeracy, and social- development scores.

A **new World Bank study** notes that health, education, and skills people acquired at various stages of life, build and depend on each other. Human development interventions must **recognise and exploit these overlapping connections**. They should be **agile, resilient and adaptive**.

A **well functioning human development system** must take faster actions during a crisis. It ensures that essential services such as health care and learning **remain uninterrupted**, and **have the flexibility** to evolve as needs change.

Data and technology play a crucial role in the delivery of services. Human development systems should ensure they are effectively used.

16. [Booze policy must beat its licence raj hangover](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Booze policy must beat its licence raj hangover” published in **Mint** on **3rd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: Concerns associated with liquor policy

News: Delhi Minister has been recently arrested over liquor policy. The article discusses the different types of liquor policies adopted by most state governments which help politicians to earn through it.

What are the different policies adopted by the government for alcohol?

Alcohol License: Alcohol permits are given to few private shops by the state. Through this limited permit/license, government keeps a check on alcohol supply and controls the demand.

However, license regime gives an advantage to politicians to receive bribe from private players.

Tight-liquor Policy: Another way to check the alcohol demand by the government is a tight liquor policy. It helps in keeping the price of the alcohol high which in turn reduces the demand. This high price helps in earning more profits and helps the tax authorities to get revenues. This extra profit is again shared by the politicians.

Therefore, there is a need to change the policy on alcohol and reduce the state discretion.

What can be the course of action?

Alcohol needs to be under GST and liquor policies should be made in such a way it focuses more on social safety rather than price and profits.

17. [Supreme Court verdict will ensure a more independent Election Commission](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“**Supreme Court verdict will ensure a more independent Election Commission**” published in the **Indian Express** on **3rd March 2023**.

“**SC Corrects Error Of Commission, With One Omission**” and “**Poll Body Building**” published in **The Times of India** on **2nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 2 – Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Relevance: About neutral selection committee for the selection of Election Commissioners.

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News: The Supreme Court, in **Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India case**, has recently formed a neutral selection committee for Election Commissioners.

About the case

Numerous petitions have been filed seeking a neutral selection committee for Election Commission. A five-judge constitution bench of the Supreme Court has recently formed such a selection committee.

While forming the neutral committee the court observed that “a vulnerable Election Commission would result in an insidious situation and detract from its efficient functioning

The committee is composed of the PM, the leader of the opposition or the largest opposition party, and CJI. The committee should be entrusted with the task till such time Parliament frames a suitable law.

Note: Article 324 of the Constitution, which deals with EC, left it to Parliament to legislate on the selection process.

The judgment also asked to ensure that the two election commissioners enjoy the same security of tenure that the CEC and apex court judges enjoy.

What are the previous attempts regarding the selection of Election Commissioners?

Constituent assembly: It suggested that the selection of ECs should be ratified by a two-third majority of a joint session of Parliament.

Constitution amendment bill: Later in 1990, a bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha to form a committee to select the chief election commissioner. However, the bill did not progress and was withdrawn four years later.

Law commission: It recommended a selection committee similar to the one SC approved recently.

Read more: [Private member Bill seeks PM-led panel for selecting Chief Election Commissioner](#)

What are the advantages of the SC's neutral selection committee?

The neutral selection committee **a)** Addresses the conflict of interest inherent in the current selection process for election commissioners, **b)** Enforces the EC's credibility and insulates the EC from political attacks, **c)** Can act as a constitutional lesson in India's troubled times, and **d)** Recognises the fine distinction between conventional democracy and constitutional democracy.

Read more: [Supreme Court calls out Centre over short tenures of Chief Election Commissioners](#)

What is the opinion of experts regarding the formation of a neutral selection committee?

Some are of the opinion that the judgment reflects the era of judicial activism. On the other hand, few of them are of the opinion that the judgement represents evolution rather than an arbitrary encroachment into the executive domain.

What needs to be done to ensure true functional independence of various bodies?

Constitutional functionaries have to be not just appointed fairly, but also held to account thereafter. Hence, the EC and other regulatory bodies should be **made autonomous of the executive** and **held answerable to designated committees of Parliament or committees of legislators**.

The SC's attention to the functioning of EC is timely. But the judgement also **raises questions about the selection process for the judiciary**. The selection process for the judiciary too needs reform.

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18. Creative formulas: On India, G20 and the Ukraine conflict

Source– The post is based on the article “**Creative formulas: On India, G20 and the Ukraine conflict**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Global grouping

Relevance: Issues related to G20

News- Recently, two key G-20 ministerial meetings, of the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) Bengaluru and Foreign Ministers Meeting (FMM) in Delhi have concluded without consensus over the Ukraine war.

What were the important developments during the G20 Finance Ministers meeting and Foreign ministers meeting?

Russia and China refused to accept the language on the **Ukraine war** that they had agreed to just three months ago in Bali.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was constrained to issue only a **Chair’s summary and outcome document**, rather than a **joint communique**.

The government also decided to include the paragraphs that were under objection by Russia and China. They named them in the document.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also issued a **Chairman’s summary and outcome documents too**. For the first time, Finance Ministers meetings have not attempted to issue statements at all.

What are the opportunities provided by the Indian G20 presidency?

Mr. Jaishankar has pointed out that the bulk of the statements that pertain to the **critical issues for the Global South**, such as food and energy security and debt management have been ironed out.

India has opportunities for enlisting those countries in the grouping that are not part of **entrenched camps of the G-7, U.S.-led developed world, and the Russia--China combine**. It will ensure that a **middle path** is found.

What is the way forward for India as G20 President?

There is clarity that India cannot depend on the **language of the Bali Summit**. Sherpas will need to iron out a **new consensus language on Ukraine**.

This will require **creative formulas**. It should take into account **Russian grievances with the language**, as well as the **western desire to condemn Russia’s actions** in the Bali document.

General

Studies

Paper – 3

General Studies - 3

1. [The New Abnormal: Global institutions, consensus are fraying under pressure from protectionism](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The New Abnormal: Global institutions, consensus are fraying under pressure from protectionism**” published in **The Indian Express** on **27th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Economic scenario across the world

News- The world economy is undergoing major changes in recent times.

What is happening across the global economy in recent times?

De-globalisation and protectionism has reached new heights in recent times. The environment of **growing distrust and reactionary policy actions** is worrying.

The **supply-side disruptions** during the last three years have created problems for the world economy. Countries are adopting policies that build **self-reliance and self-sufficiency**.

Some policies also aim at exploiting the opportunity and becoming a part of the **disrupted global supply chains**. Many such policies do not comply with WTO rules.

In the US, “**America first**” **policies** are directed at protecting US producers from foreign competition. The **Inflation Reduction Act** promotes **protectionism**.

The **European Commission** has introduced its own **Green Deal Industrial Plan**. It provides for **state aid** to help Europe in **clean tech products manufacturing**.

The EU has also come out with a **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism** to protect its industries from imports from jurisdictions with “less stringent” climate policies.

High global inflation is another unusual phenomenon.

What is the economic scenario in India?

India’s stance on **trade policy** has been confusing. It has not joined many important **free trade agreements** in the name of “**national interest**”. This **inward-looking stance** contradicts the aspiration to be a part of **global value supply chains**.

India’s desire to restrict trade with and investments from China hasn’t worked. India’s trade deficit with China has increased to \$73 billion in 2021-22 and has reportedly crossed \$64 billion during the first nine months of the current financial year.

CPI inflation hasn’t come down to 4%. It has been consistently high in recent months.

Its quest for **atmanirbharta** has kept import tariffs high. This is leading to a **high-cost economy** besides bringing in **production inefficiencies**.

The **existing PLI scheme** should be **critically reviewed** and its objectives spelt out.

What are the consequences of economic policies adopted across the world?

The **basic structure of the world order** is under threat. It was established over decades through trust, **multilateral institutions and mutually beneficial and well-intentioned global negotiations**.

2. [Towards transparency in OTT regulation](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Towards transparency in OTT regulation**” published in **The Hindu** on **27th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Entertainment and broadcasting industry

News- It has been two years since the government issued the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules through which the Ministry of I&B was given the task of regulating content on OTT and online platforms.

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What is the regulatory approach followed by India in case of OTT platforms?

India's approach can be termed as a **light touch 'co regulation' model**. There is **'self regulation'** at the industry level and **final 'oversight mechanism'** at the Ministry level.

The Rules provide for a **grievance redressal mechanism and a code of ethics**.

They mandate **access control mechanisms**. It includes **parental locks** for content classified as U/A 13+ or higher and a **reliable age verification mechanism** for programmes classified as 'A' (18+).

The current Rules provide for the **Inter -Departmental Committee as the final tier**. It comprises **officer nominees** from various ministries of the Central government, and **domain experts**.

It recommends the course of action on **OTT content violations**. The Secretary of the Ministry is competent to take the final decision.

What are issues related to OTT regulations?

There is **little awareness** about OTT rules among the general public. The Rules mandate the display of contact details relating to **grievance redressal mechanisms** and grievance officers on OTT websites/interface. However, **compliance is very low**.

In many cases, either the complaint redressal information is not published or published in a manner that makes it difficult for a user to notice easily.

What is the way forward for OTT regulations?

There is a need for **ensuring uniformity** in the way OTT publishers display key information relating to their obligations, timelines for complaint redressal, contact details of grievance officers. The **manner, text, language and frequency for display of vital information** could be enshrined in the Rules.

The OTT industry associations could be mandated to run **periodic campaigns** in print and electronic media about the grievance redressal mechanism.

The **interpretation of age rating and the content descriptors** could be in the respective languages of the video.

Further, age ratings and content descriptors could be shown prominently in **full-screen mode for a mandatory minimum duration** instead of a few seconds. Such a rule exists for films under the **Cinematograph Act**.

There is a need for **clear guidelines** to ensure that a film's classification and rating is shown **prominently and legibly** in advertisements and promos of OTT content.

A **periodic audit of the actual existence and efficacy** of age verification mechanisms and the display of grievance redressal details by each OTT platform may be undertaken by an independent body.

The full description of complaints received by OTT providers and self regulatory bodies and decisions given by them may be **published in the public domain**. Now, the **reporting formats** only capture the number of complaints received and decided

The Ministry could consider facilitating a **dedicated umbrella website** for publishing the details of applicable Rules, content codes, advisories, contact details for complaints and appeals.

There is a need for establishing a **statutory body for regulating broadcast content**. The Inter -Departmental Committee Membership may be made more broad based and representative till the constitution of such body.

There is no provision for **disclosure or publication of an apology** and warning on the platform or website. This may be incorporated in the Rules. **Financial penalties** on erring entities may also be provided.

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India's OTT regulatory model should be **efficacious combination of self regulation and legal backing**.

3. [RBI's provisioning rule proposal for bad loans is good for banks](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**RBI's provisioning rule proposal for bad loans is good for banks**” published in the **mint** on **27th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance: Issues related to banking sector

News- The Reserve Bank of India recently proposed to adopt the Expected Credit Loss (ECL) approach under the International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS-9).

What is the current RBI approach for NPAs?

RBI regulations consider non-payment of **90-plus days** for classifying an asset as “**non-performing**”. Banks are currently making provisions after assets are identified as non-performing.

For provisioning, Indian banks are subjected to a **gradual age-wise provision rule** for sub-standard assets. It starts from 15% in the first year and goes to 100% in the fourth year. This is irrespective of whether collateral is available or not.

What are some facts about Expected Credit Loss?

An Expected Credit Loss is defined as a **loss anticipated on a credit exposure or credit portfolio** due to defaults expected to occur during the normal course of business.

The major inputs of ECL are: **a) Probability of Default (PD); b) Exposure at Default (EAD); and c) Loss Given Default (LGD)**.

The PD is an estimate of the **likelihood of default** over a given time horizon.

EAD provides an **estimate of the exposure at a future default date**, taking into account expected changes in the exposure after the reporting date.

LGD is an **estimate of the percentage loss** arising from default. It is based on the difference between the contractual cash flows due and those that the lender would expect to receive, including from any collateral.

What are some facts about the Expected Credit Loss approach for NPAs?

ECL-based provisioning norms under IFRS-9 require institutions to use **point-in-time projections of PDs, LGDs and EADs**.

The new financial accounting system requires banks and other financial institutions to internally model the key elements of their **credit risk loss, stay forward-looking** and derive more **risk-sensitive measures** for loan-loss provisions.

IFRS-9 or Ind-AS-109 accounting standards explicitly require provisions and loss allowances to be made as per ECL data. RBI's prescribed **expected credit loss principle** is in line with the IFRS-9 standard.

ECL-based provisions are to be applied **at origination and for all subsequent reporting periods** of loan assets till their de-recognition.

Three stages have been specified under the new accounting standard to determine the amount of impairment to be recognized as ECL at each reporting date.

For **Stage 1 assets** that at initial recognition show **low credit risk** on the reporting date, a **12-month ECL based provisioning** is applicable.

Banks need to assess at each reporting date whether the **credit risk** on a corporate loan has increased significantly since initial recognition. Thus, the asset reaches **Stage 2**. At this stage, allowances are to be made based on **lifetime analysis of any expected loss**.

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If the loan is credit impaired, it will be put under **Stage 3**. The standard requires that provisions be based on **lifetime expected losses** with the **probability of default taken as 100%**.

What are the positive aspects of ECL based provisioning approach for NPAs?

The new accounting standards aim to **simplify and strengthen risk measurement** and the reporting of financial instruments in an **efficient and forward-looking manner**.

The ECL based provision measure will enable banks to **more pro- actively identify credit impairment** and make necessary loss provisions.

Early detection of a significant increase in credit risk **may incentivize** banks to go in for **better credit portfolio planning** and lower their prospective non-performing asset burdens.

The ECL methodology takes into account **historical PD trends** as well as current and future economic scenarios and predictions. Thus, it significantly **changes the incentives** of banks by inclining them to **manage and dispose of bad loans** much more actively.

4. Heat alert – No apparent impact, but March weather crucial for wheat

Source: The post is based on the article “**Heat alert – No apparent impact, but March weather crucial for wheat**” published in **Business Standard** on **27th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

Relevance: About wheat production and food inflation.

News: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted the temperature to be two to five degrees Celsius above normal in the major wheat-growing states for a few days.

What will be the impact of temperature rise on the Wheat crop?

Last year, the heat wave depressed wheat productivity by 2.5%, raising wheat prices above the minimum support price level, and denying the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other agencies to meet their wheat-procurement targets.

Hence, the government set up a high-level inter-ministerial committee of officials and farm experts to constantly monitor the crop and weather situation and issue timely advisories for the farmers to cope with the contingencies.

What are the steps taken by the government to control food inflation?

The management of food inflation has been fuelled partly by the high prices of cereals.

The government is reducing it by **a) banning exports** and releasing grains from public stock holding at concessional rates, **b) The FCI has offloaded 5 million tonnes of wheat** in the markets.

What should be done to further manage food inflation effectively?

Due to steps taken to reduce food inflation, the state reserves have dipped to their minimum level since 2017. Hence, the government should **pay attention to the public stocks** as further dropdown might challenge the needs of the vast public distribution system and welfare schemes. The government’s wheat-price management policies seem to have got tilted towards the consumer to the detriment of the producer. This could prove counterproductive by hurting the wheat farmers. The government needs to **strike a balance between the interests of the consumer and the grower**.

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5. Employment and participation

Source– The post is based on the article “**Employment and participation**” published in the **Business Standard** on **28th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and employment

Relevance: Facts and statistics about employment level in India

News- The National Sample Survey Office has released its annual summary of the Periodic Labour Force Survey. The report covers the period between July 2021 and June 2022.

What does the survey tell about the employment situation in India?

The PLFS is used to calculate an **unemployment rate** for India.

The report says that during 2021-22, unemployment in rural areas declined to **3.2% from 3.3%** in 2020-21. In urban areas, it declined to **6.3% from 6.6%**.

The LFPR for rural women above the age of 15 is at **36.6%** in 2021-22 and for urban women above 15 is at **23.8%**. By contrast, it is **78.2%** for rural men above the age of 15. For urban men above 15, it is **74.7%**.

What are the implications of low LFPR in India?

There is a general view that raising the LFPR should be a major priority to increase India’s level of **potential economic growth**.

There is a broad academic consensus that the **female LFPR** in India is not increasing and may in fact be declining.

The large difference between the male and female LFPRs sets India apart from its **global peers**.

In most **Southeast Asian countries**, the female LFPR is over 50%. In China it is **close to 70%**.

The influx of women workers into the formal workforce was helpful in achieving high economic growth for East Asian economies. It is a **major differentiator** for the Bangladesh economy today.

The PLFS is thus a reminder that **ensuring access to work outside the home** for women must be a priority for high economic growth.

6. In Punjab, ominous signs of extremism and police, political failure

Source– The post is based on the article “**In Punjab, ominous signs of extremism and police, political failure**” published in **The Indian Express** on **28th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance: Security issues related to Punjab

News- The followers of Amrit Pal Singh, leader stormed the police station at Ajnala near Amritsar on February 23, 2023, demanding the release of Lovepreet Singh Tufan.

What are the security related challenges faced by Punjab?

It is facing problems on multiple fronts. **Criminal gangs** have grown up in different districts and there are frequent reports of **gang warfare**. Seventy **organised gangs** with over 500 members are said to be active in the state.

Drugs are being smuggled into the state in a big way. **40% of Punjabi youth** in the age group of 15-20 years have fallen prey to drugs and 48% of farmers and labourers are addicts.

Pakistan has been **dropping weapons and drugs through drones** on a large scale. According to the BSF, there is virtually a bombardment of drones.

There is a well-orchestrated plan to **revive terrorism** in the state. Pakistan has been **sheltering and funding** the terrorist groups like Babbar Khalsa International, International Sikh Youth Federation

The ISI is also supporting **Sikh diaspora**, particularly those belonging to the World Sikh Organisation and Sikhs for Justice.

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What is the sequence of events showing the deteriorating security situation in Punjab?

As far back as 2014, the Damdami Taksal built a memorial for Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and other militants killed during Operation Blue Star

In 2016-17, there were targeted murders of RSS workers.

Khalistan posters and Bhindranwale's images are openly displayed on the streets of Punjab on the anniversary of Operation Blue Star.

What are the reasons for the fragile security situation in Punjab?

Administration is showing a very **low key response** to these developments. It is **politically convenient** for them.

Security forces are capable of dealing with these challenges. But, they are not being provided with clear **political directions**. Political masters advice in critical scenarios is generally to handle the situation **"tactfully"** and not use force. It is convenient for their **vote bank politics**.

State government is interfering largely in police functioning. Higher functionaries of police have **less functional autonomy**. There have been four Director Generals of Police in the state since September 2021.

What is the way forward to improve the security scenario in Punjab?

The security of Punjab cannot be equated with the hinterland states. The problem will have to be handled both **internally as well as externally**.

If the state government does not show the **political will**, it may be dismissed and **President's Rule** can be imposed in the state. A strong governor will have to be sent with a team of competent advisors.

7. Why India needs stable capital flows

Source– The post is based on the article **"Why India needs stable capital flows"** published in **The Indian Express** on **28th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance: External sector of economy

News- As per the RBI's quarterly statistics, the current account deficit widened to 4.4% of GDP in the second quarter of 2022-23, down from 2.2% in the preceding quarter.

What is the performance of other indicators of the external sector of the economy?

The **overall trade deficit** has declined to \$37.73 billion in the third quarter, from \$49.1 billion in the second quarter of 2022-23. There was a sharp decline in the trade deficit to \$1.27 billion in January.

Remittances and services exports have provided a counter-balance to rising **merchandise trade deficits**. In the first half of 2022-23, **services exports** recorded a growth of 32.7 % over the same period last year. **Remittances** have reached \$48 billion in April-September 2022

What are the implications of higher CAD for the Indian economy?

Large and persistent CADs are not good if they show **poor export competitiveness and are financed by unstable financing**.

Large and persistent CADs expose India to the risks associated with its financing. If CADs can be financed by **stable capital inflows**, such as FDI, they are desirable.

If deficits are financed by **volatile capital flows** such as portfolio flows, there may be a cause of concern. Portfolio flows are more susceptible to reversals in case of any **global financial shock**. FDI inflows have been weak in the current fiscal year. FDI and portfolio inflows each only financed about 18% of CADs in the second quarter of 2022-23. So, there is a **financing issue**.

The **countercyclical nature of India's CAD** is a matter of concern. The country's CAD rises when output falls rather than when demand rises. It indicates the **dominance of external**

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shocks. For instance, if oil prices rise, it raises the cost of production and leads to a fall in economic growth.

What is the way forward for economic policy in this scenario?

Over the medium term, policymakers need to arrest the **negative impacts of slowdown in global trade** on merchandise exports.

Further rate hikes by the US Fed may lead to **capital outflows**. It will generate **imported inflation**. Policy measures to facilitate exports by focusing on **structural reforms** to improve **trade competitiveness** are needed. The government must sign **free trade agreements**.

India is currently facing the **twin-deficit problem** of high fiscal and CADs. Aggressive fiscal consolidation may be undesirable amid the fears of global slowdown.

A **comfortable external environment** can be maintained by **ensuring stable financing**. Exchange rates should be used as a **shock absorber** to manage the **adverse global economic situation**.

8. Unpacking the new set of e-waste rules

Source– The post is based on the article “**Unpacking the new set of e-waste rules**” published in **The Hindu** on **28th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance: Issues related to e-waste

News- In November 2022, the Ministry of Environment and Forests further notified a new set of e-waste rules. These rules will come into force from April 1, 2023.

What are some specifics about older rules related to e-waste?

The **first set of e-waste Rules** was notified in 2011 and came into effect in 2012. An important component of the Rules was the introduction of **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**.

E-Waste rules 2016 were amended in 2018. These rules included provisions to promote ‘**authorisation**’ and ‘**product stewardship**’. Other categories of stakeholders such ‘**Producer Responsibility Organisations (PRO)**’ were also introduced in these rules.

What are issues with the new e-waste Rules of 2022?

1. The new rules of 2022 in its EPR framework include the requirement of ‘**Registration of Stakeholders**’. But, many formal recyclers undertake activities only up to the **pre-processing or segregation stage**. After that, they channelise e--waste to the informal sector.

The earlier rules placed importance on **seeking authorisation** by stakeholders. But, a **weak monitoring system and a lack of transparency** resulted in inadequate compliance.

2. A ‘**digitalized systems approach**’ has been introduced in the new rules. It may now address these challenges. **Standardising the e -waste value chain** through a common digital portal may ensure transparency.

But, it is crucial to reduce the frequency of ‘**paper trading**’ or ‘**false trail**’. It is the practice of falsely revealing 100% collection on paper while collecting ‘scrap’ to meet targets.

3. Two important stages of ‘**efficient e-waste recycling are efficient recoveries of rare earth metals and safe disposal of the residual**’ during e--waste recycling.

The rules briefly touch upon the two aspects. But, they do not clearly state the requirement for ensuring the ‘recovery tangent’.

4. The new notification does away with PRO and dismantlers and vests all the responsibility of recycling with **authorised recyclers**. This move seems to cause initial turbulence, where the informal channels may seek benefits.

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PROs acted as an **intermediary between producers and formal recyclers** by bidding for contracts from producers and arranging for **'certified and authorised' recycling**.

The informal sector plays a **crucial role** in e-waste handling. **95% of e-waste** is channelised to the sector. But, it has given little recognition in the new rules.

The recycling is the last stage that poses a major concern where e waste is handed over to the informal recyclers. The rest of the stages do not involve any hazardous practices.

What are other challenges in recycling of e-waste?

Many producers have still not set up collection centres and some have labelled their head office located on the outskirts of the city as the **'only' collection point**.

Formal companies are mainly clustered in the metropolises. They also fail to provide **doorstep collection** to consumers. The quantum of e-waste is not enough to meet their overhead expenses or transport.

consumers **lack awareness and information** about the existence of any such services.

What is the way forward for proper implementation of e-waste rules?

All stakeholders must have the **right information and intent** to safely dispose of e-waste.

There is a need for consistent efforts towards increasing **consumer awareness, strengthening reverse logistics, building capacity of stakeholders, improving existing infrastructure, enhancing product designing, and adopting green procurement practices**.

This should be supplemented by establishing a **robust collection and recycling system** on the ground.

9. In defence of financial globalisation

Source: The post is based on the article **"In defence of financial globalisation"** published in **Business Standard** on **28th February 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Globalization**

Relevance: issues associated with financial globalization

News: The article discusses the reasons why some countries fear financial globalization and what measures are needed to overcome the fear.

Why some countries fear financial globalisation?

They fear financial globalizations due to: **a) Exchange rate distortions, b) Uncertainties associated with the global financial flows, c) Loss of autonomy of monetary policy.**

These countries point to the recent aggressive monetary tightening by the US Federal Reserve.

For example, when central banks of developed markets increase interest rates, global capital leaves developing countries which leads to currency depreciation and inflation.

However, decisions cannot be made by just looking at one problem and there are measures available to tackle these issues.

What are the different measures available against the fear of financial globalizations?

Exchange rate distortions: Prices move up and down in all markets to keep demand and supply in balance. Therefore, countries which do not like price volatility, have options to exchange the variable prices for a fixed price and by giving a fee.

However, countries require sound thinking in financial economic policy to exchange for fixed prices. In the case of India, there is much to be done on this front.

Uncertainties associated with the global financial flows: Financial globalization and trade globalization are not different and move together. There are risks associated with both of them but both bring immense benefits for countries.

Therefore, better thinking and more capable institutions are required to cope up with uncertainties.

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Loss of autonomy of monetary policy: Countries like India have adopted **inflation targeting** to solve this problem. The targeting of 4 percent CPI inflation by the RBI helps it to cut through the exchange rates. Hence, monetary policy autonomy is ensured.

Why does India need globalization?

The Indian Information Technology (IT) industry has developed due to globalisation. It was one of the US investment banks that invested in the equity of an IT company back in 1993.

This led to the development of the IT industries in India at that time when Indian investors didn't have much knowledge about this industry.

Further, there is also a need of foreign investment in developing large scale renewable energies in India.

Moreover, India's flows of both the current and the capital account have increased because of increase in the international trade.

What is the way ahead?

Although globalization brings risks for an economy, it should be adopted because of its huge benefits. Risks can be tackled by coming up with better institutions and policies.

10. We need to democratically reimagine science

Source- The post is based on the article "**We need to democratically reimagine science**" published in **The Hindu** on **28th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance: Issues related to science knowledge system

News- Last week, an article in a mainstream publication claimed that the 'shivling' was proof that sages in ancient India knew of the existence of protons and electrons and that their knowledge had been forgotten because they didn't use the same words that western scholars did.

What are issues faced by science today?

Two extreme positions are followed in the knowledge system.

1. **Scientism-** There are attempts to rationalise the validity of knowledge organised in some non-science system according to the tenets of science.
2. **Pseudoscience-** To avoid the accusation of **pseudoscientific approach**, some are championing scientism. It is the claimed superiority of science and scientific knowledge. It excludes other equally legitimate experiences of reality.

The supporters of these **two extreme positions** are unable to imagine other, **better alternatives** to a world in which science and non-science are at cross purpose to each other

Sometimes to prove the claims of scientific approach, something **vaguely scientific** is preferred over other **empowering alternatives**.

Response to COVID-19 was delayed by waiting for evidence in case of scientific studies. This happens when science is understood as a **totalising system** that has the **superpower to transform all ignorance**.

Our pursuit of the **scientific image** is endangering the **real image** of the world.

Science has an **androcentrism problem that prefers masculinist viewpoint**. It has privileged some **learning ecologies** over others. It has shaped the way scientists decide which questions to ask about the world, and how scientific achievement is defined and rewarded.

What is the way forward to improve the knowledge system related to science?

There is need for more humanity scholars who can take a **critical yet informed view of science** from the outside. It must involve people who have evolved their own ways to produce and **organise knowledge based on observation and experience**, including Indigenous peoples.

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There is a need for a **cultural shift** where scientific facts are not considered to be rationally superior to a traditional observation based knowledge system.

There is a need for **better science literacy** that isn't founded on the idea that the 'scientific image' is inherently more desirable.

We need to **systematically examine our misinterpretation of, 'scientific temper'**. For a **democratic imagination** of science, there should be **systematic criticism of science**.

HSS studies should be included as part of science education in schools, colleges and universities. Where this faculty already exists, it should be **integrated into the core curriculum** instead of letting it operate on the sidelines.

Educational institutes should incorporate disciplines such as **history of science and science and technology studies**. Here, students should critically engage with the practice of science itself.

11. **Our Railways are the Northeast's leading engine for development**

Source– The post is based on the article **“Our Railways are the Northeast's leading engine for development”** published in the **mint** on **1st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure

Relevance: Development of north-eastern region

News- In the last 8 years, much work has been done to expand the footprints of railways across the northeastern region.

What are important initiatives taken by the government for developments of railway infrastructure in the north-east region?

Railway connectivity– The government has given an **unprecedented impetus to connectivity** in the region. The Railways in the last 9 years has spent over **₹50,000 crore** in the region on laying new railway lines and building bridges, tunnels. It has sanctioned new projects worth nearly **₹80,000 crore**.

India is building the **Jiribam-Imphal rail line**, which has the world's tallest pier bridge at a height of 141 metres.

In comparison with expenditure of ₹2,122 crore per year between 2009 and 2014, there has been a **370% increase in average annual budget allocation**.

Even the region's farthest corners are being covered. **121 new tunnels** are currently being constructed. This includes the **10.28 km-long Tunnel No. 12**. It is India's second longest.

Creating jobs and empowering youths– In an effort to promote local businesses and economy, the North-East Frontier Railway operated the **first parcel cargo express train** between Assam and Goa in 2022.

To promote more facilities for tourism, the North East Frontier Railways has introduced **several modern Vistadome coaches**. This is expected to raise tourist footfalls. It will further **expand job opportunities**, especially for women and disadvantaged communities.

The Indian Railways has also been instrumental in **creating employment opportunities** for the youth in the region. In the last 3 fiscal years alone, the Railways has engaged more than 20,000 unskilled workers and generated vacancies for skilled work.

A gateway to India's Act East policy– In 2014, India's **'Look East' policy** that focused on forging better economic relations with our eastern neighbours was transformed into a **geo-strategically important 'Act East' policy**.

PM Modi mentioned that the Northeast region would be the **gateway to this new policy's implementation**.

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A glowing example of this policy is the landmark **Agartala–Akhaura rail link** being built between India and Bangladesh at a cost of over ₹1,100 crore. DoNER and the ministry of external affairs are co-funding this project.

Similarly, the **Imphal railway line** will be extended till Moreh. From there, it will join Myanmar Railways at Kalay, forming a trans-Asian railway.

Projects of geo-strategic importance– The government has decided to build a **rail-cum-road corridor** that will connect Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. This will include building **India's first underwater rail tunnel** under the Brahmaputra river.

In 2017, the **strategic Dhola–Sadiya Bridge**, which connects northern Assam and eastern Arunachal Pradesh, was opened for traffic. It can support the weight of Indian battle tanks and facilitate quick movement of troops to India's northeastern borders.

In 2018, Asia's **second longest rail-cum-road bridge**, the **Bogibeel Bridge** over the Brahmaputra in Assam was inaugurated. It will cut down the travel distance between Assam and Arunachal by 80% and also provide logistical support to our defence forces.

12. A fresh beginning – New GM cotton can reverse the yield decline

Source: The post is based on the article “**A fresh beginning – New GM cotton can reverse the yield decline**” published in the **Business Standard** on **1st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS-3: Awareness in the field of biotechnology.

Relevance: About GM pest-resistant cotton.

News: Recently, Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) for bio-safety field trials has approved the new genetically modified (GM) pest-resistant cotton.

The move highlights a significant shift in the government's policy concerning GM crops. In the future, more gene-tweaked crops, which are in different stages of development, may also be approved for the gainful utilisation of cutting-edge biotechnology for raising farm output and farmers' income.

About the GM pest-resistant cotton

The crop is reported to have a set of genes derived from the soil bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). The crop produces a kind of protein in the plant that proves lethal for pink bollworms.

Note: *Pink bollworm is one of the most destructive pests which feed on the reproductive parts of the plant, depressing the overall yield and marring the lint quality of the produce.*

This can prove a boon for cotton growers who are looking for innately pest-tolerant varieties to cut down the cost of repeated spraying of pesticides.

What is the need for GEAC approval of GM pest-resistant cotton?

The desperate need to increase cotton yields: India's cotton production is stagnating over the past several years at 34-35 million bales (of 170 kg each). Average crop productivity also has descended from 558 kg a hectare in 2007 to around 457 kg in 2021. Hence, fresh Bt-cotton strains are needed.

Reduce cotton imports: India's cotton exports witness a rise of 200% in value terms in the past 10 months of this fiscal year. Recently, the government waived off import duty on cotton, but this has limited effect.

Why Bt-cotton varieties are notwithstanding pests?

Farmers are also partly **responsible for the Bt-cotton varieties losing their inherent capability** to withstand pests. Farmers have to plant a strip of non-GM plants on the periphery of the Bt-cotton fields. This belt acts as a refuge for pests and minimises the chances of their acquiring immunity against the Bt toxin by feeding on the main crop. But, the farmers do not undertake this recommended precaution.

What are the challenges faced by Indian cotton industries?

Together price rise and reduced yields hit all segments of the employment-intensive textile sector, including ginners, yarn producers, textile mills, garment makers, and exporters.

The price competitiveness of Indian textile and garment units is not improved compared to Indian counterparts such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

What should be done before introducing GM pest-resistant cotton?

The farmers should be advised to strictly follow the planting of buffer in all GM crops. Else, the new GM pest-resistant cotton will also have limited life spans and would need to be replaced far more quickly than is normally necessary.

13. Lessons from Turkey: How to make India earthquake prepared

Source- The post is based on the article “**Lessons from Turkey: How to make India earthquake prepared**” published in **The Indian Express** on **2nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Disaster management

Relevance: Earthquake induced disasters

News- The destruction caused by earthquakes in Turkey should be alarming for us.

Nearly 58% of the Indian landmass is vulnerable to earthquakes. Geologists have warned of a probable massive earthquake in the Himalayan state.

What are the main components of India policy on earthquake and issues related to the policy?

India’s policy on earthquake preparedness operates primarily at the scale of structural details. It is guided by the National Building Codes. This includes specifying dimensions of columns, beams and details of the reinforcements that join these elements together.

It ignores the buildings that were constructed before such codes were published in 1962. Such buildings form a large part of our cities.

It assumes infallibility in the processes of enforcement. It relies only on penalisation and illegalities.

It treats earthquakes as a problem of individual buildings. It assumes that buildings exist and behave in complete isolation from their urban context.

The truth is that buildings exist in clusters and in the event of an earthquake, behave as a system. They collapse on nearby buildings and on the abutting streets.

What are the interventions needed to improve the preparedness of the country for earthquakes?

At individual building level- There is a need to create a system of **retrofitting existing structures and enforcing seismic codes with more efficiency**.

Such a policy should include two measures- (1) To create a system of **tax-based or development rights-based incentives for retrofitting** one’s building up to seismic codes. This will enable the growth of an industry around retrofitting and will generate a body of well-trained professionals and competent organisations.

2) By ensuring **better enforcement of seismic codes** through a similar model. **The National Retrofitting Programme** was launched in 2014 is a step in that direction. The RBI directed banks to deny loans for any building activity that does not meet the standards of earthquake-resistant design.

Japan is a good example in this case. It has **invested heavily in technological measures** to mitigate the damage from the frequent earthquakes that it experiences.

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Skyscrapers are built with **counterweights and other high-tech provisions** to minimise the impact of tremors. Small houses are built on **flexible foundations** and public infrastructure is **integrated with automated triggers** that cut power, gas, and water lines during earthquakes. **At urban-level**– The policy should start with **surveys and audits** that can generate **earthquake vulnerability maps**. These maps show the parts of the city that are more prone to serious damage.

This should follow four criteria- (1) The **percentage of vulnerable structures** in the area. (2) The availability of **evacuation routes and distances** from the nearest open ground. (3) **Density of the urban fabric**. (4) **Location of nearest relief services and the efficiency** with which these services can reach affected sites.

Using such maps, enforcement, incentives, and response centres can be proportionally distributed across the urban terrain.

A policy on earthquake preparedness will require a **visionary, radical and transformative approach**.

Some areas such as dense historic city centres will still be beyond repair. They will require either **surgical retrofitting or revised town planning schemes**.

What are challenges in executing these interventions?

Surgical retrofitting is **unreliable** and the revised town planning schemes are **politically suicidal**.

People across time and space have been in **denial of such threats**. Therefore, **political will** is lacking to execute such transformations. Earthquakes are not seen as a fatal threat.

14. The country must work at raising productivity growth

Source– The post is based on the article “**The country must work at raising productivity growth**” published in the **mint** on **2nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and growth

Relevance: Factors impacting growth of Indian economy

News- The recent budgets have hiked capital expenditure substantially but there is less focus on improving productivity of the economy.

What is the rationale behind substantially hiked capital expenditure in recent budgets?

The reason is **multiplier effects of capex**. It is assumed that increased capex would lead to **higher growth in future**, as these investments could **enhance capital formation**.

Prospects of higher growth might also attract **more private investments**.

However, such a growth strategy fails to realise its full potential unless there is **corresponding increases in productivity**.

Why is productivity an issue for the Indian economy?

A recent study published in **January’s RBI Bulletin** shows the existence of **large productivity differences across sectors**.

The study examined the **time span between 2001 and 2019** and divided it into **two sub-periods**, 2001-10 and 2011-19.

RBI study offers **disaggregated economy-wide estimates** in the manufacturing sector. **Wide variations** are found in productivity growth across sectors.

The sectors **crucial in accelerating industrial growth**, such as electrical equipment, refined petroleum, machinery and chemicals, witnessed a **productivity decline** in the second time period, compared to the first.

The sectors with **lower share in overall value addition**, such recycling, have registered **higher productivity** growth since 2010.

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Two important inferences can be made from the figures. First, **capital-intensive sectors** saw a decline in productivity growth. **Labour-intensive sectors**, barring transport equipment and parts had higher productivity.

The RBI study's findings are in line with a 2021 **World Bank report**. It observed that the level of productivity in the South Asia Region(SAR) remains the **lowest among emerging market and developing Economies regions**.

The World Bank report argues that the **average level of labour productivity** in SAR during 2013-18 was **only 5% of the advanced economy average**.

However, it should be noted that within South Asia, India stands out with higher growth of productivity.

What is the way forward to increase the productivity of the Indian economy?

There is a need to enhance investments to **strengthen human capital**. The economy has already achieved outcomes in terms of raising life expectancy, reducing mortality, and expanding access to education.

The **investments in physical infrastructure** needs to be complemented with commensurate **human capital improvements**.

This involves a **two-pronged approach**. First, provide **more capital access** to factors that contribute to **human capital formation** and ensure that these are inclusive. Second, we must ensure **continuous quality improvements** in human capital.

Resource reallocation was the driver of aggregate productivity during 2001-10. Productivity can be raised by **sectoral reallocation of resources from low to more productive sectors**. It should be accompanied by **improved local services and urban planning**.

There is a need for renewed effort to promote the **reallocation of capital and labour** to more productive firms within sectors.

Productivity-enhancing inter-firm resource reallocation can be encouraged by policies to **foster competition** and by **reducing regulatory burdens** that discourage firm growth. This requires continued reforms.

15. Searing changes: On heatwaves predicted by the Met Office

Source: The post is based on the article "**Searing changes: On heatwaves predicted by the Met Office**" published in **The Hindu** on **2nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS-3: Disaster Management.

Relevance: About the impact of heat waves.

News: February was generally considered as a 'spring' and a 'winter month' by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and usually posts temperatures in the low 20s. But recently, the IMD has said that February 2023 was the warmest February since 1901 with the average maximum temperature at nearly 29.54°C. The IMD has also said that these trends are likely to spill over into summer.

What is a heat wave, and what are its implications?

Read here: [Winter Heatwaves – Explained, pointwise](#)

About the present status of heatwaves in India

There has been a gradual rise in the temperature along with that the minimum temperatures are also scaling new heights. Most of northeast, eastern, central and northwest India is expected to post "above normal" temperatures.

Heatwaves during March-May are likely over most parts of India, except for the north-east, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and coastal Karnataka.

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What are the impacts of heat waves in India?

Impact on humans: A Lancet study reported a **55% rise in deaths** due to extreme heat and that excessive heat also led to a **loss of 167.2 billion potential labour hours** among Indians in 2021.

Impact on the wheat yields: India produced 106.84 million tonnes of wheat in the 2021-22 crop season, less than the 109.59 million tonnes in the 2020-21 season. This is due to the hotter-than-usual March that impacted the crop during its growth phase.

What are the challenges in predicting the impact of heat waves this year?

This is because, **a) Only after March**, the global **forecast models can be able to analyse sea-surface conditions** and can credibly extrapolate, **b) The interplay between local weather and climate is complex**, and **c) The science continues to be uncertain about the impact of climate change on rising heatwave intensities.**

What should be done to reduce the impact of heat waves in India?

a) Public health systems should be more responsive to the challenges from rising temperatures, **b) Several States** have action plans and early warning initiatives but inadequate outreach, particularly in rural India. This should be addressed, **c) Promote newer crop varieties** that mature early, **d) Greater emphasis** on aiding farmers to tweak soil and water management practices to adapt to the impact of heat waves.

16. Combining social welfare and capital markets through SSE

Source: The post is based on an article “**Combining social welfare and capital markets through SSE**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: About Social Stock Exchange

News: Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has given approval to the National Stock Exchange of India to set up a Social Stock Exchange (**SSE**). SSE was presented in the Union Budget 2019.

What is a Social Stock Exchange (SSE)?

[Click Here to Read](#)

Who can invest in SSE?

Retail investors can only invest in securities offered by for-profit social enterprises (FPSEs) under the Main Board.

In all other cases, **only institutional investors and non-institutional investors** can invest in securities issued by SEs.

What are the eligibility criteria to be listed as a social enterprise?

Any non-profit organisation (**NPO**) or for-profit social enterprise (**FPSEs**) that establishes the social intent would be recognised as a social enterprise (**SE**). This will make them eligible to be registered or listed on the SSE.

Further, **seventeen eligibility criteria** are listed under Regulations of SEBI’s **ICDR (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2018**.

Some of them are that enterprises must be serving to eradicate either **a) hunger**, **b) poverty**, **c) malnutrition and inequality**; **d) promoting education**, **e) employability**, among others.

Which organisations are not be eligible as social enterprise?

Corporate foundations, political or religious organisations or activities, professional or trade associations, infrastructure and housing companies (except affordable housing) would not be identified as an SE.

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Further, NPOs which are dependent on corporates for more than 50% of its funding are also not eligible to be listed as SE.

How can NPOs raise money?

NPOs can raise money either through issuance of Zero Coupon Zero Principal (**ZCZP**) Instruments from private placement or public issue, or donations from mutual funds. It must be registered with SSE to issue the bonds.

The **ZCZP must have a specific tenure** and can only be issued for a specific project or activity that is to be completed within a specified duration.

It **must also provide past experience in the social sector** in order to acquire investor confidence and tackle concerns about potential default.

Moreover, NPOs may also choose to register on the SSE and not raise funds through it but via other means. However, they would have to make necessary disclosures about it.

What is the difference between ZCZP bonds and conventional bonds?

ZCZP bonds differ from conventional bonds in the sense that it entails zero coupon and no principal payment at maturity.

The conventional bonds provide a fixed interest (or repayment) on the funds raised through varied contractual agreement, whereas ZCZP would not provide any such return, instead promising a social return.

What are other methods through which NPOs can raise money?

Another finance method available to NPOs is the Development Impact Bonds (**DIB**). DIBs are results-based contracts.

Under DIBs, NPOs initially raise money from '**Risk Funder**'. They finance the project on a pre-payment basis and also bear the risk of non-delivery of social metrics.

After the project has been completed and delivered on pre-agreed social metrics at pre-agreed costs/rates, a grant is made to the NPO.

The donor who makes the grant upon achieving the social metrics is referred to as '**Outcome Funders**'.

How can For-Profit Enterprises (FPEs) raise money?

FPEs **need not register with social stock exchanges** to raise funds. However, it must comply with all provisions of the ICDR Regulations when raising through the SSE.

It can raise money through issue of equity shares or issuing equity shares to an Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) including Social Impact Fund or issue of debt instruments.

What disclosures are required to be made to SEBI?

SEBI's regulations state that a social enterprise should submit an annual impact report. The report must be audited by a social audit firm and has to be submitted within 90 days from the end of the financial year.

Listed NPOs are required to provide the details on the quarterly basis about the money raised and utilised.

17. New thermal plants: A reality check

Source: The post is based on an article "**New thermal plants: A reality check**" published in **Business Standard** on **2nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Infrastructure**

Relevance: concerns associated with recommendation of the draft National Electricity Plan.

News: Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has been given the task to frame the National Electricity Plan (**NEP**). The draft recommends creation of new capacity of up to 51 GW of coal-fired plants.

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What are the concerns associated with the creation of new capacity of coal-fired plants?

One of the major concerns is the environmental. The recommendation has come at a time when India is committed to a net-zero emissions by 2070.

States like Haryana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, are planning to set up new capacities of coal-fired plants and these new capacities are mostly located away from coal-bearing states. This ultimately adds burden of transporting coal.

Why has draft NEP recommended setting up new thermal power plants?

It is because the growth in renewables is not fast enough to cater to the rising power demand. According to the estimates, even if the renewable energy capacity grows at four times the pace it has grown, India would need new thermal power plants.

What can be the probable alternative solution to the recommendation made by the draft NEP?

Instead of setting up new plants, it would be better to improve the performance of the existing plants and add capacity to existing stations or brownfield expansion.

The draft NEP projects about 55 percent plant load factor (PLF) by 2026-27 and 61 percent by 2031-32. However, it is feasible to achieve above 70 percent PLF by maintaining the existing plants.

Thus, it would save capital investment in the new thermal power plants and mobilize it towards establishing renewable capacities.

What can be the course of action?

There has been a sudden rise in power demand in the post-Covid period and states are facing supply challenges. Therefore, they prefer to consider the view of having their own capacity.

However, instead of infusing fresh capex, it is better to **invite offers from private developers** who may set up capacity outside the state and contracting power from generators who may have untied capacity, etc.

This would help in utilizing the capex for renewables and it will also help railways to utilize its freight services for other goods because it is the railways which bear the burden of transporting coal to thermal power plants.

18. SC decision to set up expert committee in Adani matter casts doubt on SEBI's investigation

Source– The post is based on the article “**SC decision to set up expert committee in Adani matter casts doubt on SEBI's investigation**” published in **The Indian Express** on **3rd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Mobilisation of resources

Relevance: Money and capital markets

News- Recently, Hindenburg Research published a report levelling several allegations against the Adani Group.

What is the mandate of the committee?

- To assess the factors that have led to **market volatility**.
- To examine if there has been **regulatory failure** in this case
- To suggest measures to **strengthen the regulatory apparatus and ensure compliance** with the existing framework to protect investors.

The committee has been asked to furnish its report in sealed cover within two months.

What are issues related to the SC decision?

The formation of the committee casts aspersions on SEBI's investigation and **doubts its ability**.

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The SEBI chairman has been requested by the court to ensure all information is provided to the committee.

There is **opacity** in the manner in which the members of the panel have been selected, and the **lack of transparency the process entails**.

SEBI has stated that it will conduct a detailed examination into Adani stocks. The Court has asked SEBI to conclude its investigation into the matter within two months. It would have been more prudent to **wait for its regulator's report**.

19. States have a large role in ensuring capital formation

Source– The post is based on the article “**States have a large role in ensuring capital formation**” published in the **mint** on **3rd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government budgeting

Relevance: Capital expenditure

News- The Central government is continuing with its focus on capital expenditure. Capital expenditure by states has also drawn the attention of policymakers.

How has capital expenditure by states gained importance in recent times?

The **combined spending of Indian states on capital expenditure** now exceeds that of the central government.

In 2021-22, this figure combined for states and Union territories was **₹10.5 trillion**. The Centre's effective capital expenditure that year was ₹8.4 trillion.

Theme of this year's **RBI report on state finances** is ‘**Capital Formation in India: The Role of States**’. It is an eloquent acknowledgement of the power of states in this context.

What are issues related to capital expenditure by states?

Capital expenditure by states is **neither uniform nor necessarily related to the economic size** of a particular state.

Uttar Pradesh gross state domestic product (GSDP) was estimated to be ₹20.5 trillion in 2022-23. The budget for capital expenditure was ₹1.24 trillion. Maharashtra with higher GSDP figures of ₹35 trillion budgeted for capital spending of ₹65,000 crore.

States are **unable to spend the full budgeted amount of capital expenditure**, despite having sufficient resources. They have a tendency to **postpone capital expenditure** till revenue streams firm up.

What is the way forward to improve the quality of capital expenditure by states?

There is a need to address this **uneven inclination of states or capacity for capital expenditure**.

The ultimate aim of all capital expenditure is to enhance the **productive capacity of the economy**. The **nature of state capital expenditure** is also vitally important. It should **align with central capital expenditure** to optimise long term enhancements of economic capacity.

For example, UP may hike its road building programme to amplify the impact of the efforts of the National Highway Authority of India. Maharashtra and TN may enhance allocations to urban bodies.

The **quality and speed of expenditure** also deserves equal attention. States would need to step up their **execution capacity and establish an enabling regulatory environment**.

Land availability, clearances, logistics and communication, project management, stakeholder engagement and local capacities are all critical determinants that need attention.

The **planning and budgeting cycle of states** also has to be aligned with the fund releases so as to fully utilise the resources within the time available. They need to spend fully the budgeted capital amounts uniformly over the year.

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The RBI report mentions that states should **mainstream capital expenditure** planning rather than treating them as residuals and meeting budgetary targets from this expenditure.

20. Development concerns – Nicobar project must be reconsidered

Source: The post is based on an article “**Development concerns – Nicobar project must be reconsidered**” published in **Business Standard** on **3rd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure

Relevance: Concerns associated with developmental project on the Great Nicobar Island.

News: The government has recently given the clearance for the development of a project on the Great Nicobar Island. The project is to be implemented in three phases over the next 30 years.

About the Project

[Click Here to Read](#)

What are the concerns with the project?

The Great Nicobar Island is known for its rainforest ecosystems, having unique coral reefs and rare species of turtles and other fauna and flora.

Further, the protection of leatherback sea turtles, the flagship turtle species of this island, is part of the country’s **National Marine Turtle Action Plan**. The **Galathea Bay** is among the important marine turtle habitats of India.

Great Nicobar Island also lies **in the seismically active zone** and is prone to maritime hazards like tsunamis.

Nearly 850 square kilometres of the island’s area is notified as tribal reserve under the **Andaman and Nicobar Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulations, 1956**.

The area was also designated as a **biosphere reserve** in 1989, and made part of Unesco’s “**Man and Biosphere Programme**” in 2013.

Further, the **Shompen and Nicobarese tribes** reside in the dense tropical rainforests of the Great Nicobar. They are among the world’s least studied and most vulnerable tribal groups that still relies on hunting and food gathering.

Hence, environmentalists are worried about the deleterious impact of this project on ecology, disaster vulnerability, local communities’ rights, and various other fields.

[Click Here to Read More](#)

What can be the way ahead?

One of the reasons to develop the project is **national security** because there has been an increase in the presence of Chinese ships in the region of Bay of Bengal and in the Indo-Pacific.

Therefore, looking at national security as well as other concerns, the project **can be modified to minimise damage** to the natural ecosystem of Great Nicobar.

21. Our forests are under threat — here’s how they are certified

Source- The post is based on the article “**Our forests are under threat — here’s how they are certified**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS-3 – Environment – Afforestation

Relevance: Conservation and management of forests

News- The article explains the certification process of forests.

What is the meaning of forest certification?

It offers a multi-layer audit system that seeks to authenticate the origin, legality, and sustainability of forest-based products such as timber, furniture, handicraft, paper and pulp, rubber, and many more.

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What are the better methods of forest conservation?

Forests should be harvested in a **sustainable manner** for the products. In fact, **periodic harvesting of trees** is necessary and healthy for forests. Trees have a lifespan, beyond which they die and decay.

After a certain age, the **capacity of trees to absorb carbon dioxide** gets saturated. Younger and fresher trees are **more efficient at capturing carbon dioxide**. The problem arises only when trees are felled indiscriminately.

What is the status of the global forest certification industry?

The three-decade-old **global certification industry** began as a way to establish. It depended upon **independent third-party audits**, whether forests were being **managed in a sustainable manner**.

There are **two major international standards** for **sustainable management** of forests and forest-based products. One has been developed by the **Forest Stewardship Council, or FSC**. The other is developed by **Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certifications, or PEFC**. FSC certification is more popular and in demand, and also more expensive.

Organisations like FSC or PEFC are only the developers and owners of standards like the **International Organisation of Standardisation (ISO) or Bureau of International Standards (BIS)**.

They are not involved in the **evaluation and auditing of the processes** being followed by the forest managers or manufacturers or traders of forest-based products. That is the job of certification bodies authorised by FSC or PEFC.

The certification bodies often **subcontract their work to smaller organisations**. PEFC does not insist on the use of its **own standards**. Instead, it endorses the **'national' standards** of any country if they are aligned with its own.

Two main types of certification are on offer: **forest management (FM) and Chain of Custody (CoC)**. CoC certification is meant to guarantee the traceability of a forest product like timber throughout the supply chain from origin to market.

What is the status of forest certification in India?

The forest certification industry has been operating in India for the last 15 years. Currently, forests in only Uttar Pradesh are certified. They are **PEFC-certified**. These standards have been developed by the New [Delhi](#)-based nonprofit **Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF)**.

Some other states too obtained certification, but subsequently dropped out. The Bhamragad forest division in Maharashtra was the first to obtain FSC certification for forest management. However, all of these expired over time.

Many **agroforestry projects**, such as those run by ITC, and several paper mills too have forest management certification.

There are a large number of **CoC certifications**, but the **dropout rate is 40%**. As of now, there are 1,527 valid CoC certifications by FSC, and 1,010 that are suspended, expired, or have been terminated.

What are efforts by the government to develop India-specific standards?

The government has made efforts to define **national standards for the management of forests**. Based on the recommendations of an **expert committee in 2005**, the Environment Ministry had asked relevant institutions like the Bhopal-based Indian Institute of Forest Management to draw up **national forest standards**.

A **draft Cabinet note** seeking the government's approval for setting up such standards was drawn up. However, the effort did not come to fruition.

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When the **NCCF** came into being in 2015, offering **PEFC certification** in India, the Environment Ministry nominated an officer on the governing board. It gave it **official legitimacy**. But the nomination was later withdrawn.

Last year, the Ministry **associated itself with FSC**, by launching its **new India standards**.

The role of **private certification agencies** has come under sustained criticism. So, the Ministry has restarted efforts to develop **official national forest standards**.

The government says the indigenous system of certifications will be **simple, transparent, and easy to adopt**, even by small farmers and tree growers. The benchmarks will adhere to **internationally accepted norms**, but will take into account **India's national circumstances**.

22. Clean-tech as the next big thing in rural India

Source– The post is based on the article “**Clean-tech as the next big thing in rural India**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Social empowerment

Relevance: Use of technology for empowering women

News- Distributed renewable energy (DRE) is transforming women's livelihoods at the grassroots.

What is the potential of clean technologies for women's livelihoods?

A recent **Council on Energy, Environment and Water study** has shown that out of the 13,000 early adopters of clean tech appliances, more than **80% are women**.

Renewable energy- powered technologies provide an additional advantage to women farmers and microentrepreneurs by **enhancing income opportunities through mechanisation**. They also free women from several gender assigned manual activities that are laborious.

By 2030, India is expected to see **30 million women -owned MSMEs**, employing around 150 million people. Renewable energy livelihood technologies have the potential to transform rural livelihoods, with women at the core of this transition.

What is the way forward to utilise the full potential of clean technologies for the livelihood of women?

First, leverage the experience of **early women adopters**. DRE appliances are perceived as **high risk purchases**, especially by women users due to socio economic reasons.

Technology providers must leverage early users to **share their experiences** with potential customers

Second, organise **local events and demos**. People want to see a high-tech product before believing in its **ability and promised benefits**, especially women. They historically have **limited access to new information**.

These events also create spaces for women to **network, become aware of the product and connect with people**. It can help them **procure, finance and use** these machines.

Third, **enable easy finance** to purchase products. Financiers supporting women farmers and micro entrepreneurs should consider the **technologies themselves as collaterals** while **easing the loan application process**.

Technology manufacturers and promoters should also ensure **adequate after sales service and buy backs**. To build financiers' confidence, **evidence on the economic viability** of these technologies should be shared.

Fourth, support **backwards and forward market linkages**. Only technology provision is not enough in all cases. Many rural products have larger market potential. Thus, **finding and connecting producers to consumption hubs** in urban areas are equally important to generate higher incomes.

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Women often struggle with established **market linkages** because of their **limited mobility and networks** outside their villages. **Collectivising women or establishing business models** that enable them to sell to an intermediary can ensure a regular revenue stream.

Fifth, enable **policy convergence**. No private sector entity has the kind of **reach and scale** possessed by government institutions. So, it is important to **leverage their reach**.

Multiple Ministries are working towards promoting livelihoods for women. They should **embrace clean energy solutions** to further their respective programmes and outcomes.

23. Which is the cheetah?

Source: The post is based on an article “Which is the cheetah?” published in **Business Standard** on **4th March 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Indian Economy**

Relevance: India’s economic growth and associated concerns

News: The article compares the economy of India and China and it also provides highlights towards India’s projected economy.

How has the Indian economy performed compared to China in the past years?

India’s economy has grown faster than China’s in the year 2021 and 2022.

For example, India’s economy grew at 7% compared to China’s which was at 3% for the year 2022. Similarly, in 2021, India’s economy grew at 9.1% while China’s was at 8.1%.

For the years 2014-2018, **India outpaced China for the first time with an average 7.4 percent growth**, while China managed 7 percent. This gave India the image of the world’s fastest-growing large economy.

However, things changed during the Covid period. For the years 2019 and 2020, **China managed to do better than India**. China grew by 6 percent in 2019 compared to India’s 3.9 percent for 2019-20.

Therefore, there was a large gap between the economies of the two nations for the Covid period. This benefited China to outpace India in average economic growth.

What are the different projections of China’s and India’s economic growth?

Economic forecasters have held that India would do significantly better than China in 2023-24.

For example, the International Monetary Fund postulated China’s growth at 4.4 percent against 6.1 percent for India.

However, the projections changed after China gave up its zero-tolerance policy on Covid.

This led forecasters to project higher economic growth for China in 2023. Most have moved up their China forecast to 5.5 percent.

However, when compared to the growth projection given by this year’s Economic Survey (2022-23), the projection for China is below that of India’s.

The Economic Survey has kept India’s economic growth between 6.0-6.8 percent for the year 2023-24.

However, there is a doubt over the economic forecast projected by the Economic Survey after looking at India’s GDP growth for the quarter October-December.

What are the concerns with India’s economic growth?

The **GDP growth for October-December was only at 4.4 percent**.

Further, **there is no sign of the economic growth** that would take India from a 5 percent growth to 6 percent and more as stated by the Survey.

India also has serious **trade and fiscal imbalances and excessive dependence on capital expenditure** by the government.

24. Twist In Helix – Regulating consumer genomics in India

Source: The post is based on an article “**Twist In Helix – Regulating consumer genomics in India**” published in **The Times of India** on **4th March 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Science and Technology**

Relevance: Concerns associated with genome-testing kits

News: Indian companies are launching genome-testing kits that would be used by common people at homes to test their DNAs. This has various concerns associated with it.

What are the concerns with genome-testing kits?

Data Protection: Gene-testing companies tie up with third parties and India also does not have any law on personal data protection. Therefore, there are concerns over misuses of the citizens’ personal data.

Discrimination by insurance companies: Gene-testing can help to know a person’s risk over Type-2 diabetes or Alzheimer’s and other genetic diseases. This might lead to discrimination by the health insurance companies over giving the insurance.

What can be the way ahead?

Genome testing kits are popular in the US and even there it was found that gene-testing companies tie up with third parties.

Therefore, there is a need for the personal data protection law as well as the need to regulate information acquired by such testing companies.

25. G20 meet shows a deepening crisis in multilateralism

Source– The post is based on the article “**G20 meet shows a deepening crisis in multilateralism**” published in **The Indian Express** on **4th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Global groupings

Relevance: Issues related to G20

News- Group of Twenty foreign ministers, who met in Delhi this week were not able to agree on a final statement.

What are the factors behind lack of consensus in G20 meetings?

It shows the **deepening great power conflict and worsening crisis of multilateralism**. Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address to the G20 foreign ministers recognised the **profound crisis in multilateralism** today.

The principal reason for the **diplomatic failure at Delhi** was the decision by Russia to walk away from the **Bali consensus** and China’s decision to support Russia.

Three months ago, when the Bali summit took place, the Russian invasion was facing challenges in Ukraine. It rapidly lost ground in the areas that it had occupied.

Since then Russia has **reinforced its defensive lines** in Ukraine. It is now ready for **renewed military offensive**. Moscow has also successfully consolidated its expansive **strategic partnership with Beijing**.

Putin appears confident that time is on his side. A prolonged war would **exhaust Ukraine, divide the West and allow Moscow to prevail**, if at a massive cost to Russia.

US President Joe Biden has reaffirmed that the US and the West will **stand by Ukraine** for as long as it takes.

What is the scope for India as G20 President?

The diplomatic room for Delhi, which led the effort in Bali to produce a consensus had clearly shrunk in recent times.

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The PM has underlined India's twin ambitions — to continue the **campaign to reform multilateralism** and to get the world to take into consideration the **challenges faced by the "Global South"**.

Foreign minister S. Jaishanker acknowledged the difficulties in producing a **consensus on Ukraine**.

He pointed to agreement among the foreign ministers on a number of **issues of interest to India and the developing world**. These include **food and energy security, cooperation to counter terrorism, climate change, global health and disaster management**.

India should be **optimistic and committed to a sustained effort** to make the G20 summit in September a success.