



9 PM Compilation

February, 2023

General Studies - 1

1. [Gandhi's ideals of non-violence and communal harmony remain relevant 75 years after his assassination](#)
2. [Welfare schemes will falter in the absence of accurate population data](#)
3. [Tasks for India's millet revolution](#)
4. [A problem of science at the Padma awards](#)
5. [There's a lot in a name: Use of the term 'northeast' doesn't do justice to the complex history of the region's states](#)
6. [Our growth needs deep analysis more than constant trumpeting](#)
7. [Cities would literally be much cooler with more trees around](#)
8. [India's population gap over China to widen further, shows data](#)
9. [India's urban centres are ailing due to lack of funds](#)
10. [Lithium reserves: Our J&K find could put India on the lithium map](#)
11. [Hill or city, urban planning cannot be an afterthought](#)
12. [Hindi in the world: In the era of cultural-flattening, India must strengthen its linguistic traditions](#)
13. [Urbanisation and urban dynamics](#)
14. [Judgement reserved – Too early to celebrate the lithium find](#)
15. [A 'democratisation' that is more a fallacy](#)
16. [We should shed colonial legacy by creating content in mother languages](#)
17. [Listen to the court – SC warning against renaming places by abusing history, and invoking it selectively, is valuable and timely](#)
18. [Supreme Court censure on renaming games: Because the past lives in the present](#)

General Studies - 2

1. [In NREGA reforms, prioritise the worker and her dues](#)
2. [India must focus on health and education post-budget](#)
3. ['General Assembly divided over UN reforms'](#)
4. [The French Connection – France's pension reform is a story that resonates around the ageing rich world](#)
5. [The funding and demand for MGNREGA](#)
6. [The New Great Game In The Himalayas – China's territorial disputes are as much about dominating important rivers as occupying land](#)
7. [The New Great Game In The Himalayas – China's territorial disputes are as much about dominating important rivers as occupying land](#)
8. [A new Sino-Russian alliance: What are its implications for India?](#)
9. [Is judicial majoritarianism justified?](#)
10. [India-US: The high tech boost](#)
11. [Fire and ice – Problem facing Ladakh](#)
12. [Trading more within Asia makes economic sense](#)
13. [System Bails Out – Kappan finally free on bail but many aren't, in contravention of juridical principles](#)
14. [Two years after Myanmar coup, how the country is a mess — and India's headache has worsened](#)
15. [On Budget 2023: Health in Amrit Kaal](#)
16. [Charge sheet scrutiny is not a case of prying eyes](#)
17. [Pakistan Conundrum – Islamabad's economic collapse won't be good for India](#)
18. [Going green – The Budget can help India transition out of its dependence on fossil fuels](#)
19. [The discrepancies in the latest AISHE report](#)

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

20. [Spy In The Sky – China’s espionage balloons or espionage ships are part of an aggressive strategy that can target India too](#)
21. [The freedom of speech and an ‘adolescent India’](#)
22. [CEO NITI Aayog Param Iyer on Budget 2023-24: An infrastructure push for the people](#)
23. [Budget 2023-24 ignores rural distress, tries to fix demand problem with supply interventions](#)
24. [Instead of criminalising child marriage, Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma should heed PM Modi’s call of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao](#)
25. [Municipal Mess – From MCD to BMC, paralysis of urban local bodies undermines local governance and democracy](#)
26. [The demand for MGNREGS work is unmet](#)
27. [End-of-life decisions – SC’s tweaks on directive norms are welcome, but legislation will be better](#)
28. [In light of the Russia-Ukraine war, an opportunity to modernise India’s defence industry](#)
29. [Neglecting the health sector has consequences](#)
30. [A quick reset – India and Canada are looking at the big picture as they put behind discord](#)
31. [The lesson from a court appointment drama](#)
32. [The fine print in the Indo-US pact, iCET](#)
33. [Exploring the blue in the India-France partnership](#)
34. [About Child marriages: In Assam, The Answer Is Schools, Not Jails](#)
35. [Article 105 of Constitution: The limits to free speech in Parliament, and what Supreme Court has ruled](#)
36. [The demand for a Greater Tipraland by the TIPRA Motha](#)
37. [Why the outrage at a minor domestic worker’s abuse is unlikely to change things](#)
38. [Moving With Times – SC’s flexible approach to interpreting the Constitution has enhanced its relevance to governance](#)
39. [Competition law amendments: Of penalties and misses](#)
40. [House rules and the weapon of expunction](#)
41. [Constitutional oath is not a mere formality](#)
42. [Honour of office: On new Governors of States appointed by the Centre](#)
43. [Japan’s evolving relations with the Global South](#)
44. [Shaping a more disabled-friendly digital ecosystem](#)
45. [Ladakh, a fragile region, needs autonomy](#)
46. [More Minnus, Draupadis – Every tribal success story is a reminder how much govts need to do for genuine Adivasi empowerment](#)
47. [Fossil and time: On the draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics bill](#)
48. [Post-retirement appointments: a danger to judicial independence](#)
49. [India’s Sri Lankan refugees need fair consideration](#)
50. [Union Of 100 States – Why India must have many small states. It will make for better economy and better politics](#)
51. [Freedom and the big freeze](#)
52. [Reigning over the capital, from above](#)
53. [How data can empower MPs to serve people better](#)
54. [Wrong Answer, Govts – Repeated exam paper leaks should tell authorities that technology not punishment is the cure](#)
55. [The Express View: Keeping an eye on China](#)
56. [Going off-course: On the rural jobs scheme and the Centre’s bid to change its funding](#)
57. [A Bigger Idea Of India – Why Indians already command economic heft of \\$5 trillion and how we can leverage this](#)

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

58. [EC Needs A Smart Focus – Cooling-off periods are impractical in social media age](#)
59. [Special Marriage Act: What is the Act, how does it work, what is the notice period?](#)
60. [The protest test in India-Iran ties](#)
61. [Missing link in UGC's foreign university plans to set up campuses in India](#)
62. [Changes in organ transplant rules: A new lease of life](#)
63. [All That India Can Do To Make Cancer A Less Dismal State](#)
64. [The curious case of the disqualification of a politician](#)
65. [On sealed cover jurisprudence](#)
66. [Why not use Sanskrit as our first or second official language?](#)
67. [Slow progress to creating a safe workplace for women](#)
68. [Ladakh's winter of discontent From cheering its UT status, the region is now mired in protest](#)
69. [Rooftop Solar Photovoltaics \(RTPV\) for poverty alleviation](#)
70. [The multiplier impact of more expressways](#)
71. [Discipline and discussion – on discussions in Parliament](#)
72. [Why Lok Sabha must have a Deputy Speaker](#)
73. [Turn off the tap of urban bias in rural development](#)
74. [A new chapter in defence and tech](#)
75. [Badministrators -Nasty social media brawl between IAS & IPS officers points to a larger, worrying trend](#)
76. [Giving data its due – On National Data and Analytics Platform](#)
77. [On US-China relations](#)
78. [On children's right to protect their genetic information](#)
79. [Justice.gov.in – On Court's digitisation programmes](#)
80. [How vikasvaad has lost out to centralisation of government](#)
81. [One year of Ukraine war: India and France together for peace](#)
82. [Is caste discrimination so rampant in the US to warrant separate legislation?](#)
83. [Section 153A: its use and misuse](#)
84. [Not neutral: On India's stand on Ukraine at the U.N.](#)
85. [Explained | Menstrual leave and its global standing](#)
86. [The council and caste – Caste discrimination becomes a political battle in the US](#)
87. [Shiv Sena debacle must stand as an important lesson](#)
88. [Reducing pain: On menstrual leave](#)
89. [Nari shakti' offers G20 nations a women's empowerment model](#)
90. [Cooperation amid conflict is India's burden for G20](#)
91. [The middle path for India in the new world disorder](#)
92. [International courts and climate change](#)
93. [On regulating online sale of drugs in India](#)
94. [No method in the madness – A new critique of the V-Dem democracy rankings highlights where the problem lies](#)
95. [Phasing out the line, 'math is not for a girl'](#)
96. [G20: India's platform for global leadership](#)
97. [Our Health, Our Data – Digital models for disease tracking are crucial. But so are data analytic skills & privacy protection](#)
98. [Positing India's stand on the Ukraine war](#)
99. [South Asia's human capital is the resilience it needs](#)
100. [Booze policy must beat its licence raj hangover](#)
101. [Supreme Court verdict will ensure a more independent Election Commission](#)
102. [Creative formulas: On India, G20 and the Ukraine conflict](#)

General Studies - 3

1. [Green debut – Green bonds can help lower borrowing cost](#)
2. [Revisit the tax treatment of tobacco products](#)
3. [Intellectual property rights sensitivity should not be at the expense of public health obligations](#)
4. [Build, But Smartly – Infra along LAC is strategically vital. But Joshimath shows why projects must respect mountain ecology](#)
5. [Warning bells – India's regulatory framework must infuse confidence in investors, savers](#)
6. [Known unknowns of the fertiliser subsidy](#)
7. [Education challenges of employment](#)
8. [Hedging and entrenched attitudes from India and Pakistan are a reminder that technical agreements are only a partial solution](#)
9. [21st century India needs a real-time fiscal data portal](#)
10. [Solar energy is not the best option for India](#)
11. [Expect action on our aim of carbon neutrality by 2070](#)
12. [Why state must cede power to communities](#)
13. [Economic survey 2022-23 highlights](#)
14. [Budget 2023 pulls off an artful balance](#)
15. [Tiresome rules out, trust-based model in](#)
16. [The social sector has been short-changed once again](#)
17. [India's G20 Presidency: LiFE lessons for global markets](#)
18. [Decluttering the defence budget](#)
19. [A 'waterfall' for insolvency resolution](#)
20. [New income tax regime: A nudge on income tax mustn't become a shove](#)
21. [The Union budget ticks all the right boxes for India Inc](#)
22. [Co-ops Get Their Moment In The Sun](#)
23. [AI chatbot, my future colleague](#)
24. ['India's much-hyped tiger recovery needs a total reboot and official monopoly over tiger research should end'](#)
25. [Certainly, uncertainty has declined – on world economy](#)
26. [India's just energy transition is more than a coal story](#)
27. [Scientists' take on the Union Budget 2023-24](#)
28. [Hydropower projects in the Himalaya should be reconsidered given recent crisis](#)
29. [The tax gambit – Government should not stop nudging people towards safe, long-term savings](#)
30. [Bajra Boosters – Policies promoting millets will not work unless governments address farmers' incentives](#)
31. [Green growth push – New initiatives have long-term potential](#)
32. [Jammu, village defence and governance](#)
33. [What will drive global growth?](#)
34. [How are earthquakes measured and how massive is the Turkey one?](#)
35. [Ballooning Options To Spy](#)
36. [Women-centric development – India Inc must help enhance the role of women in nation building](#)
37. [India must reduce its public debt ratio to build economic resilience](#)
38. [U.S. shot down a Chinese 'spy' balloon](#)
39. [Boosting pharma research](#)
40. [Private sector has not responded to government initiatives so far](#)
41. [Make In IndAIa – As Google comes up with a ChatGPT rival & AI becomes ubiquitous, here's what GoI must do](#)

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

42. [Signs of a weakening public sector](#)
43. [A Nordic-India connect to power a green transition](#)
44. [The role of labour unions in emerging sectors](#)
45. [Counting the Female Labour Force Participation Rate accurately](#)
46. [Our unique EV transition is a leadership opportunity](#)
47. [All governments are crony capitalists](#)
48. [Quake Up Call – Turkiye, Syria impact magnified by poor construction. India must ensure building codes are followed](#)
49. [Global green growth conundrum](#)
50. [India's green hydrogen challenge](#)
51. [India must avoid growing into a dystopia](#)
52. [Unintended consequences – Subsidy on EVs must be revisited](#)
53. [Girl in Gurgaon: Cases of abuse of domestic workers raise questions about informal employment sector](#)
54. [India's law and order matrix needs a reboot](#)
55. [India's fiscal dilemma](#)
56. [India-U.S. space cooperation, from handshake to hug](#)
57. [A question of quorum](#)
58. [Challenging Google – New AI-driven search can be disruptive](#)
59. [Unmet needs in wireless regulations](#)
60. [Indian Air Force's revised doctrine adopts a holistic approach to the country's security imperatives](#)
61. [The 4 Pillars Holding Up India's Expanding Middle](#)
62. [Make Then Sell – India's ambitious defence export target comes up against long delays in product development](#)
63. [Let's Go Against the Grain of Wheat, Rice Bias](#)
64. [Generative AI prompts serious questions of copyright](#)
65. [Boosting productivity – Nano-fertilisers will improve efficiency](#)
66. [Flying high into Amrit Kaal](#)
67. [A manifesto for tackling the silent pandemic of AMR](#)
68. [Our labour market's playing field is in the process of being levelled](#)
69. [R&D: An inside job – For innovation to power economic growth, Indian industry must raise its investment in in-house R&D five-fold](#)
70. [The Express View on climate report: Shore up the defences](#)
71. [Shuffling feet: On foreign trade and policy responses](#)
72. [Use a clear compass to navigate our challenges and opportunities](#)
73. [Deep sea fish conservation must not go adrift](#)
74. [Fasten Your Seatbelt, India – Air India's huge order has multiple implications, for the airline, for civil aviation, for policy and for manufacturing. Here's a deep dive](#)
75. [Supreme Court must use cases pending against UAPA to examine its scope](#)
76. [Billionaire Raj: The rise of India's multi-business conglomerates](#)
77. [Social security and the story of two Budgets](#)
78. [land degradation: Saving the land for better use](#)
79. [India as a developed country: Developed by 2047? Yes](#)
80. [Budget and the growth process](#)
81. [How Union budget 2023 may foster greater violations of privacy](#)
82. [Reducing Army presence in J&K hinterland: A thaw in the Valley](#)

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

83. [Be Africa, Not Las Vegas – The message from Himalayan belt is clear: India needs to nurture back wild nature in some parts, and stop the construction mania](#)
84. [UPI promotion should not eclipse our e-rupee](#)
85. [UPI: Local & global](#)
86. [A clean gamble: On carbon trading](#)
87. [India can become a biodiversity champion](#)
88. [The difficulty with renewables](#)
89. [India must update its security strategy and shed obsession with Pakistan](#)
90. [India at a crossroads: Reduce the risks of economic concentration](#)
91. [India's R&D estimates are an incomplete picture](#)
92. [A case that scans the working of the anti-defection law](#)
93. [Can a centralized regulation help drug quality?](#)
94. [New delivery mechanisms for genetic therapy will do us good](#)
95. [Safe across borders: On Unified Payments Interface-PayNow link](#)
96. [Disclosure gains – SEBI's Proposal on listing](#)
97. [Slow path to peace in J&K](#)
98. [Banga Message – On Appointment of Indians in](#)
99. [Cyberattacks are rising, but there is an ideal patch](#)
100. [The New Abnormal: Global institutions, consensus are fraying under pressure from protectionism](#)
101. [Towards transparency in OTT regulation](#)
102. [RBI's provisioning rule proposal for bad loans is good for banks](#)
103. [Heat alert – No apparent impact, but March weather crucial for wheat](#)
104. [Employment and participation](#)
105. [In Punjab, ominous signs of extremism and police, political failure](#)
106. [Why India needs stable capital flows](#)
107. [Unpacking the new set of e-waste rules](#)
108. [In defence of financial globalisation](#)
109. [We need to democratically reimagine science](#)
110. [Our Railways are the Northeast's leading engine for development](#)
111. [A fresh beginning – New GM cotton can reverse the yield decline](#)
112. [Lessons from Turkey: How to make India earthquake prepared](#)
113. [The country must work at raising productivity growth](#)
114. [Searing changes: On heatwaves predicted by the Met Office](#)
115. [Combining social welfare and capital markets through SSE](#)
116. [New thermal plants: A reality check](#)
117. [SC decision to set up expert committee in Adani matter casts doubt on SEBI's investigation](#)
118. [States have a large role in ensuring capital formation](#)
119. [Development concerns – Nicobar project must be reconsidered](#)
120. [Our forests are under threat — here's how they are certified](#)
121. [Clean-tech as the next big thing in rural India](#)
122. [Which is the cheetah?](#)
123. [Twist In Helix – Regulating consumer genomics in India](#)
124. [G20 meet shows a deepening crisis in multilateralism](#)

General Studies - 4

1. [India must become a knowledge republic as it charts its way ahead](#)

General Studies Paper –1

General Studies - 1

1. [Gandhi's ideals of non-violence and communal harmony remain relevant 75 years after his assassination](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Gandhi's ideals of non-violence and communal harmony remain relevant 75 years after his assassination**” published in **The Indian Express** on 30th January 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Indian History

Relevance: Ideals of Mahatma Gandhi

News: Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948. The year 2023 marks the **75 years of his assassination** and even after so many years, Gandhi's ideals of non-violence and communal harmony remain relevant.

What were Gandhi's beliefs?

He believed that the people of India could not be truly free unless there is an **end to social discrimination, economic empowerment, solidarity and empathy** towards different languages, religions and cultures.

He made the most humble and poverty-stricken Indian feel that he was one amongst them. He acted **as an agent to connect different strata of the society**.

Gandhi understood that the idea of violence taken up by revolutionaries cannot stay for a longer time. Hence, he **preached non-violent resistance**.

He **transformed the idea of Indian independence** from a small educated elite into a mass and people-centred movement. He gave the freedom struggle a **vernacular dimension**.

Gandhi was against untouchability and rejected distinctions based on caste, creed, and religion. He believed that India could be a secular country with all religious faiths co-existing in harmony and in mutual respect.

He used his ideals among the masses to stop communal riots and indiscriminate killings.

However, the partition of India was a deeply wounding experience for him which he took as a personal failure.

How are these beliefs still relevant today?

Gandhi believed in masses and tried to bridge the gap between the lower strata and elite. However, in the present we can see this gap is widening.

Gandhi believed in the coexistence of all religions, caste, creed, etc. However, differences and discrimination still exist.

Gandhi believed in the empowered citizen, self-reliant and progressive India. However, we are back to the politics of entitlement with the distribution of welfare as offerings from the state and its leaders.

Hence, the ideals of Gandhiji can be applied even today in transforming India.

2. [Welfare schemes will falter in the absence of accurate population data](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Welfare schemes will falter in the absence of accurate population data**” published in **The Indian Express** on 30th January 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Population and associated issues

Relevance– Population census

News– The article explains the need for conducting the census, due in 2021.

Why is conducting the population Census, due in 2021, necessary?

Challenges in proper estimation– The biggest challenge is to estimate **the district population**. The district is the **basic administrative unit** for governing, planning, and executing government projects and schemes.

In the absence of updated Census data, **annual population count** at the district level is estimated by using **past Census information**.

Such exercises give **reasonably fair estimates** when the year of population estimation is within the range of a maximum of 10 years. Beyond this period, estimations can be erroneous due to **dynamic patterns of population components**.

Many districts of India are experiencing a **faster demographic transition**. So using census data of 2011 after 2021 becomes more of an **assumption-based model**.

Covid-19 further **makes the situation complex** as it impacts the fertility and mortality situation in the country.

Many states lack a complete **civil registration system** with a full count of birth and death data. So, the demographers face enormous challenges in providing population counts at the district level.

Migration data– It has great implications for **economic activities and social harmony**. With economic progress, the **pattern of migration** in India has been changing in unprecedented ways.

Representative data– The Census counts everyone across regions, classes, religions, languages, castes, marital status, and occupation patterns. Most national-level surveys such as NFHS and NSSO do not have **representative data at the population subgroup level**. It will be known only via population Census.

What is the way forward?

India has a **long history of conducting Census** without interruption from 1881 with the rare exception of Assam in 1981 and Jammu Kashmir in 1991.

A regular Census at the national and sub-national levels has been a **matter of pride** for India. It has to be continued until India achieves a **fool-proof civil registration system and a dynamic National Population Register**.

Postponing the Census has **immediate and long-term negative consequences** for India. The government and other stakeholders should **take urgent steps** to conduct the Census as early as possible.

3. Tasks for India's millet revolution

Source– The post is based on the article “**Tasks for India's millet revolution**” published in **The Hindu** on **31st January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Economic geography. GS1- Cropping patterns in various parts of country

Relevance– Diversification of agriculture for sustainability

News– The article explains some facts and statistics about millets in India. It also explains the issues with millets cultivation in India and steps needed to boost the production of millets.

What are some facts and statistics about millets in the context of India?

Millets have **special nutritive properties**. They are high in protein, dietary fiber, micronutrients, and antioxidants. They have **special agronomic characteristics like drought-resistant and suitable for semi-arid regions**.

Two groups of millets are grown in India. **Major millets** include sorghum, pearl millet and finger millet. **Minor millets** include foxtail, little millet, kodo, proso, and barnyard millet.

In 2019-20, the total production of nutri-cereals was **47.7 million tonnes**. The bulk of this was maize, a non-millet crop used mainly as feed.

The production of sorghum, pearl millet, and finger millet along with other millets put together was **18.9 million tonnes**.

Currently, millets are procured in only a few States. **Stocks in the central pool** are small. In May 2022, central stocks had 33 million tonnes of rice but only four lakh tonnes of nutri cereals.

What are issues with millets cultivation in India?

There has been a **decline in the area under millet cultivation**. Over the last decade, the production of sorghum has fallen, the production of pearl millet and finger millet has stagnated or declined.

The low productivity of millets is another challenge. The productivity of jowar and bajra has increased, but only marginally. The yield of bajra was 1,079 kg per ha in 2010-11 and 1,237 kg per ha in 2017-18.

What are the lessons from the experience of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in promoting the production and consumption of millets in the Kolli hills, Tamil Nadu?

Yield enhancement was attempted by using **improved seeds, new agronomic practices, and new technology**.

Customised post-harvest machinery was introduced.

Another major initiative was training. Ready-to-cook products were branded.

Net returns from value-added products were **five to 10 times higher** than from grain.

Yields have risen as a result of **improved seeds, agronomic practices and intercropping**. There have been significant improvements in incomes from millet farming.

What is the way forward to increase millet cultivation in India?

Increasing the production of millets requires **multiple interventions including scientific inputs, institutional mechanisms, and financial support**.

There is a need to pay attention to the **economics of millet cultivation**.

Small farmers in hilly regions and dryland plains are going to cultivate millets only if it gives them **good returns**. **Adequate public support** can make millet cultivation profitable.

4. [A problem of science at the Padma awards](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “A problem of science at the Padma awards” published in **The Hindu** on **31st January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Indian culture

Relevance– Awards and recognitions

News– The article explains the issues raised by recent conferring of Padma awards under science and engineering category to plant breeders. It also tells about general perception of science.

What is the general perception of science?

Science is distinguished in practice by **following the scientific method** and the **rituals of academic publishing**. It is an activity that only a highly and specifically trained group of people is allowed to practise.

Its findings are presumed to be **implicitly superior** to knowledge that isn't uncovered and organised by the same rules.

Why the recent Padma awards to plant breeders under the category of science raises doubts?

Successful plant breeders defy the above-mentioned **perceptions of science**. So, perhaps they should be rewarded under a **category called 'agriculture and seeds'**.

Cheruvayal K. Raman was awarded the **Padma Shri** for having conserved more than 50 rice varieties on a modest farm in Wayanad. He wasn't formally **trained as a botanist or scientist**. He has **not published scientific papers**.

Over the years, agricultural scientists have understood the **scientific basis** of the work of those like Mr. Raman. However, such a basis alone doesn't make something science.

Mr. Dudekula was also awarded with **Padma Shri** in the **'science and engineering' category**. He has been credited with popularizing the **dietary benefits of millets**.

But his prescriptions also include **scientifically dubious elements** such as homoeopathy; consuming millets to “prevent” or cure various cancers, diabetes; and avoiding the consumption of milk, eggs, and non-vegetarian food.

Mr. Dudekula doesn’t appear to have **published any scientific papers** demonstrating the efficacy of these claims.

What is the way forward?

We shouldn’t **celebrate alternative systems** that compromise trust in scientifically tested medicine in the midst of a pandemic and several epidemics.

Increasing **access to and consumption of millets** could help India reduce its frightening prevalence of anemia. But, claims of **therapeutic effects against cancer** is a big leap and certainly requires scrutiny.

Before conferring any Padma award in the ‘**science and engineering**’ category, the Indian government must ensure that a claim has been **scientifically validated**. It should encourage the **systematic validation** of all such claims before they are lauded.

5. [There’s a lot in a name: Use of the term ‘northeast’ doesn’t do justice to the complex history of the region’s states](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**There’s a lot in a name: Use of the term ‘northeast’ doesn’t do justice to the complex history of the region’s states**” published in **The Indian Express** on **4th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Regionalism

Relevance–

News– The article explains the issues related to use of term northeast for extreme eastern parts of country

What is the meaning of the term northeast?

It is a metaphor used to describe the **complex, rich and heterogeneous area** in India’s eastern extreme.

The identity of the northeast is shaped primarily by its **oppositional relationship** with other parts of the country. The term remains a **shorthand** for Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim.

The “**backward**”, “**underdeveloped**”, “**culturally isolated**”, or “**historically distant**” are used to mark its distinctiveness from other parts of the country.

It is further reinforced through **exclusive region-wide planning bodies, separate ministries and region-specific area studies centres**.

What is the history associated with the region?

In its **colonial origins**, the northeast was a frontier inhabited by the wild peoples of farther India who are **culturally outside Bharat**.

The adoption of the term by independent India was the recognition of its **conflict-mediating and order-keeping functions in a politically unsettled region**. After 75 years of independence, there is no shift in our understanding of the term.

What are issues with the use of the term northeast?

There is no agreement on what unifies the constituents of the northeast. There is no single criterion of culture, language, religion, ecology, economy, or agriculture that unifies the region. Yet, it is treated as a distinctive cultural zone.

Its use has generated **complex images, assumptions, beliefs and cultural justifications** about the region and its peoples.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

It **essentializes the history and identity** of the various states and their peoples. They are considered **unique and incomparable**.

The continued use of the term distorts its **constituent states' complex social and cultural environment and their deep historical links** with other parts of the country.

It misrepresents the **political, cultural and historical richness** of the individual states.

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

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

Syllabus: GS1- Indian economy and growth

Relevance– Growth trends of Indian economy

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

Why is there confusion about India's growth numbers?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What needs to be done by economic policymakers?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 1 – Urbanisation and associated issues

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Equitable distribution of trees throughout the city.

Reflective roofs or whiter-than-white paint.

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

What are the challenges to urban forestry?

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS1- Population and associated issues

Relevance– Statistics and indicators related to population

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

What are population projections for India and China?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What does the statistics say about fertility rate in India?

India's **total fertility rate (TFR)** was **5.73** compared to a global rate of 4.86 in 1950. In 2022, India's rate was **estimated to be 2.01** while the global rate is 2.31. China's TFR declined from 5.81 in 1950 to 1.18 in 2022.

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

What does the statistics say about migration in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance– Urban financing

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

What is the scenario of urban financing in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the impacts of lack of urban financing?

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

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

What is the way forward for urban financing in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About Lithium reserves.

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

About the Lithium reserves around the globe

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

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

What is Lithium?

Read here: [Facts about Lithium](#)

What are the applications of Lithium?

Read here: [Uses of Lithium](#)

What is the importance of Lithium reserves in India?

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

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

What is the importance of Lithium reserves?

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

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

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

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

11. Hill or city, urban planning cannot be an afterthought

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

Syllabus: GS1- Urbanisation. GS3- Disaster management

Relevance– Urban planning for disaster resilience

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

What are the issues faced by urban areas?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

areas and flood warning systems are necessary.

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

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

12. Hindi in the world: In the era of cultural-flattening, India must strengthen its linguistic traditions

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

Syllabus: GS1- Indian culture

Relevance– Issues related to languages

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

What is the status of Hindi in the UN?

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

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

What are the challenges before Hindi and other other languages?

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

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

How can Indian languages have a global presence?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13. [Urbanisation and urban dynamics](#)

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

Syllabus: GS 1 – Urbanization

Relevance: Urbanization and Urban dynamics

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

What are urbanisation and urban dynamics?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Changes brought by urbanisation are beneficial to businesses, lead to the improvement of public services, improve technology and infrastructure, and help in the creation of new ideas.

However, **urbanisation also leads to overcrowding**, resource extinction, pollution and land degradation.

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

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

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

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

14. [Judgement reserved – Too early to celebrate the lithium find](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Judgement reserved – Too early to celebrate the lithium find**” published in **Business Standard** on **20th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Lithium reserves.

News: Recently, a vast deposit of lithium ores has been found in Jammu’s Reasi district.

What is Lithium?

Read here: [Facts about Lithium](#)

About the Lithium findings

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

What are the applications of Lithium?

Read here: [Uses of Lithium](#)

What are the issues with extracting the identified Lithium resources?

If the estimates that the Reasi deposits of 5.9 million tonnes of lithium are close to being accurate, then India possesses the largest reserves after Bolivia. However, **a) the accurate estimates of proven quantity** could eventually be **significantly lower than the current inferred amount**.

b) The extraction process could take a decade or more and **require substantial investment**. For instance, in 2005, Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation (GSPC) announced that it had discovered \$100 billion worth of natural gas in the offshore Krishna Godavari Basin. It was hailed as a historic moment and large investments poured in over the next 17 years. But GPSC still did not achieve commercial production.

c) India should not only have to extract and refine lithium but also set up a value chain for battery production. This process of extraction, refining, and battery production will take a fair amount of investment and time.

d) The project will create a serious environmental impact and possibly require the shifting of local populations since the area is geologically “young” and seismically unstable.

e) Reasi is close to the Line of Control, which means there could be **geopolitical complications**.

What should be done?

The government will have to **work out a comprehensive policy** if the reserves are proven.

Work on sodium-ion batteries: India has always been aware that it is lacking in lithium reserves. Hence, India has invested in researching alternative storage technologies involving sodium-ion batteries. Sodium is far more abundantly available than lithium it can be extracted from seawater. There has been promising research into sodium-ion battery technologies in the laboratories of the IITs. Indian should continue and scale up it to be commercially available.

The lithium discovery is worth investigating, but that should not hurt research on alternative storage technologies.

15. A ‘democratisation’ that is more a fallacy

Source– The post is based on the article “A ‘democratisation’ that is more a fallacy” published in **The Hindu** on **18th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Society

Relevance: Impacts of changing social media landscape

News- The Social media has democratised self-expression. But, it has mixed effects on the public sphere.

How has the social media landscape changed in recent times?

There is a trend towards **increasing brevity and homogeneity**.

The early days of online discourse centred around **long-form text** on blogs and message boards. It required **conscious engagement** from the writer and the reader. The reader spent time reading and making her/his own expression in her own words.

With the advent of social media, **long-form text has changed to shorter versions**. There is a shift from posts to tweets to retweets, likes, memes, and emojis.

One of the most striking things about online communication is **little speaking by people**.

Social media also **forces brevity (accurate and shorter expressions)** due to its format and the larger ecosystem associated with it.

What are the impacts of social media on different spheres of life?

It puts constraints on the possibilities of what can be said. This limits the **scope of self-expression**.

The incentives of social media privileges **antagonism, outrage over dialogue and reason**. It compels individuals to become **more antagonistic and outrageous**. The effect is that the medium dictates the message.

The ability of social media platforms for **short messaging** is impacting the “**creator economy**”. In order to improve user engagement, social media platforms have started **compensating users** for original audiovisual content.

Platforms have increasingly moved to **shorter video formats** ranging from 15 to 60 seconds. There are many reports of creators trying to hack the algorithms.

With the emergence of **generative AI such as ChatGPT** for text and images, there is a high possibility that “self-expression” will be further diminished. It will make it easy to generate content without requiring the individual to apply herself in any meaningful manner.

16. We should shed colonial legacy by creating content in mother languages

Source– The post is based on the article “**Former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu writes: We should shed colonial legacy by creating content in mother languages**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Art and Culture

Relevance: Socio-Cultural development

News- The article emphasis the need to overhaul the language of education system to make it more **inclusive and diverse**

What is the viewpoint of UNESCO on mother language?

In November 1999, **UNESCO** declared **February 21 as International Mother Language Day** in response to the declining state of many languages all over the world.

This year’s theme, “**Multilingual education — a necessity to transform education,**”

UNESCO states, a monolingual system of education which relies on “**providing education in only one language** that is not necessarily shared by all learners **may negatively impact learning** performance, and the development of socio-emotional and foundational literacy skills.”

What are the challenges with colonial era learning?

Even as we **Amrit celebrate Azadi ka Mahotsav**, to mark 75 years of Independence, we have not been able to shed this colonial legacy of dependence on English.

Educators and parents continue to accord unquestioned primacy to English and, as a result, **the child is compelled to study his or her mother tongue as a “second/third language” at school.**

Our emphasis on English has, ironically, made the educational system **exclusive and restrictive.**

While limiting the acquisition of knowledge in technical and professional courses, to a select few, we made it **inaccessible to a vast majority of our students.**

What are government initiatives in this regard?

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** is a farsighted document which advocates education in one’s mother tongue right from the primary-school level.

AICTE’s landmark decision to permit **BTech programmes in 11 native languages.**

Government is looking forward for **employment and job creation** in mother languages ex-SSC.

What is the way forward?

Mother tongue as the medium of instruction gives confidence to youth.

Including mother languages in learning, we can fast-track methods to make quality education more **accessible, equitable and inclusive.**

Thus, steps need to be scaled up at all levels. We must involve all key stakeholders in education — **policymakers, schools, colleges and universities, teachers, regulatory institutions and non-governmental** bodies.

17. [Judgement reserved – Too early to celebrate the lithium find](#)

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Relevance: About Lithium reserves.

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Thus, steps need to be scaled up at all levels. We must involve all key stakeholders in education — **policymakers, schools, colleges and universities, teachers, regulatory institutions and non-governmental** bodies.

20. 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.

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

21. 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. [In NREGA reforms, prioritise the worker and her dues](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “In NREGA reforms, prioritise the worker and her dues” published in **The Hindu** on **30th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance– Schemes for employment generation

News– The article explains the issues with MGNREGA. It suggests the reforms needed for the scheme.

What are the issues with the MGNREGA scheme?

The majority of reforms related to MGNREGA have focused on **centralisation** such as the **electronic fund management system, geo-tagging of assets and a national mobile monitoring system (NMMS)**. They have **disrupted implementation**.

Almost 3,000 women NREGA workers in Muzaffarpur district are protesting against the NMMS application after the app failed to capture their attendance.

The **process of wage payments** created by the central government has become even **more complex**. For instance, seven or more functionaries have to sign off before payment due to a worker can be approved.

There are **slow and unpredictable releases of funds** by the central government. It is one of the fundamental reasons for State governments inability to ensure the full potential of NREGA. As of today, ₹18,191 crore in liabilities is due to 24 States.

Worksites are not opened on time, and the work provided does not match demand.

What reforms are needed for MGNREGA?

Payment reforms– There is a need to **address delays in wage payments** to restore the faith of workers in the programme. In 2016, the Supreme Court of India directed the government to ensure that wages were paid on time.

The Ministry of Rural Development must **simplify the payment process** and has to be **transparent** about pending wage payments.

Implementation reforms– There is a need to **strengthen implementation capacities** where expenditure is low instead of curbing expenditure where employment generation is high. As per Economic Survey of 2016, states which are spending more are implementing the programme better because they have better capacities

For NREGA, reforms cannot be based on ‘**targeting**’ better. There has to be a **focus on exclusion and not inclusion errors**. Exclusion must be identified at the household level.

Panchayats, blocks and districts where employment of SCs and ST families is lower than their proportion in the population must be identified. Similarly, panchayats where the **average wage being paid** is lower than the **notified wage rate** must be identified as well.

The **online Management Information System of NREGA** can be used to find the shortcomings. There is a need to run the programme like a **demand-based law**, and not a scheme.

Consultative process–The discussions on any proposed reforms should be made **participatory**. State governments have played a pivotal role in the successes and failures of NREGA.

Any proposed reforms must be tabled in State assemblies in addition to Parliament. **Civil society organisations, worker unions and representatives of self-help groups** should be brought into the discussion.

Other reforms– It is time the Government of India should **map the impact of each of its reforms** on access to NREGA, particularly in poorer States.

The central government must be **held accountable** for the denial of entitlements to NREGA workers as a result of top down reforms.

2. [India must focus on health and education post-budget](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India must focus on health and education post-budget**” published in the **Livemint** on **30th January 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the status of healthcare and education.

News: The government must focus on improving the status of healthcare and education.

What is the status of healthcare and education?

Healthcare

-Low budget spending: The National Health Policy of 2017 set a target for government spending on healthcare which is 2.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) by both the Centre and states. But the budgetary outlay for healthcare has been range-bound between 1.2% and 1.4% in the period 2014-20. Thereafter, the covid pandemic saw it rising to 1.8% in 2020-21, and 2.1% for 2021-22.

-According to a public health research organization, India had 69,265 hospitals in 2019, which translates roughly to one hospital for every 20,350 Indians.

-The increased role of Private in health care: There are only 25,778 public hospitals against 43,487 private ones. Of the roughly 1.9 million hospital beds in India, there are only 0.71 million beds in public hospitals against 1.18 million in the private sector.

-Less health insurance penetration: Over 80% of India's population is not covered by health insurance, forcing patients to pay for expensive treatment from their own pockets.

Education

-Unethical practices: Regulation in the sector has focused largely on higher education and elementary and secondary school stages. Regulation for the two other stages—pre-primary and tertiary (10+2) levels—is largely a grey area, leading to multiple unethical practices. A 2022 study by the ministry of education found that close to 61% of the Centre's spending is focused on elementary and secondary education.

For example, many premier 10+2 institutions outsource their pedagogy to coaching outfits and charge exorbitant fees.

-Edtech and coaching classes are two other categories that require stricter regulation.

-Low spending: The 1968 education policy promised 6% of GDP. This was reaffirmed in the 1986 policy and its 1992 review, National Education Policy. But still, the combined Centre-state expenditure on education, as per Economic Survey 2021-22, has remained at 2.8% of GDP through 2014-20.

What should be done to improve the status of healthcare and education?

Regulating the healthcare and education sectors is not easy. So, there should be close coordination with states and their various institutions.

Budget is not the ideal vehicle to accomplish the complex task of improving regulatory structures. Hence, a post-budget start has to be made.

3. [‘General Assembly divided over UN reforms’](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**General Assembly divided over UN reforms**” published in **The Hindu** on **31st January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Important international institutions

Relevance– Global governance

News– The article explains the reason behind the slow pace of UNSC reforms. It also explains the issues with UNSC working.

What are the reasons behind the slow pace of UNSC reforms?

The **disunited state of the UN General Assembly** is responsible for it. Reform of the UN Security Council was a **member-driven process**.

The members of the UNGA had to first come together to **pass a resolution** demanding the reform of the Security Council. Still, no resolution has been passed by UNGA

The General Assembly has always been **very much divided**. Among the 193 countries, there are **five negotiating groups** and they are neutralising each other.

Permanent members are not enthusiastic about reform of the UN system. But, they had all agreed that it was necessary for introducing changes in the Security Council.

What are the issues with UNSC?

The **system of veto** in the Security Council is 77 years old. It has become a **tool to block the work of the global body** and not to encourage it.

The Indian establishment views the UN as a **“frozen 1945-invented mechanism”**. Some powers have been singularly focused on their own advantage. They are not concerned about the well-being of the international community.

Why does India deserve to be a member of UNSC?

India had played a **vital role** in the past years in **improving the response mechanism** of the United Nations.

India has contributed in **stabilising the world** which had been shaken by pandemic and war in recent years.

4. [The French Connection – France’s pension reform is a story that resonates around the ageing rich world](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“21st century India needs a real-time fiscal data portal”** published in the **Livemint** on **31st January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests.

Relevance: About French pension reforms.

News: The French government now tries to push through highly unpopular pension reforms.

Why does the government want to push pension reforms?

The French government’s pension system is one of the most generous in the world. But it has long been known to be unsustainable. The entire system cost Paris just under 14% of its GDP in 2021. This led to French public debt reaching record-high levels of 115% of GDP last year.

A report last year by the Pensions Advisory Council – a French state body – predicted the system will run into a deficit in the not-too-distant future. For example, by 2027 the pension deficit will be almost \$12 billion.

The Ukraine war has put extra strain on European economies that are now battling high inflation and energy crunches.

What are the reforms the French government proposes?

The government is seeking an increase in the minimum retirement age for most people from 62 to 64. It is also supporting businesses through tax cuts by ensuring pension reforms.

Note: *The burgeoning public debt and demographic decline are also witnessed in Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and Belgium. All plan to lift the minimum retirement age to 67 over the coming years – the UK will lift it to 68.*

This will ensure a more robust geopolitical role for France, both in Europe and across the world.

5. [The funding and demand for MGNREGA](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The funding and demand for MGNREGA**” published in **The Hindu** on **1st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: MGNREGS and associated concerns

News: The article discusses the performance of MGNREGS and challenges associated with it.

What are some highlights of Economic Survey 2022-23 on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)?

The Economic Survey 2022-23 showed that 6.49 crore households demanded work under the MGNREGS.

The survey credited the scheme for having a positive impact on income per household, agricultural productivity, and production-related expenditure.

It also said that the scheme helped with income diversification and infusing resilience into rural livelihoods.

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

[Click Here to Read](#)

How has MGNREGA helped during the Covid Pandemic?

It acted as a lifeline for a record 11 crore workers during the first lockdown in 2020.

Wages earned under MGNREGA helped compensate between 20% to 80% of the loss of income caused because of the lockdown. The demand for the work also increased during the pandemic. Moreover, the demand for jobs under MGNREGA has seen a decline in recent months but it is still larger than pre-pandemic levels. This shows that rural households are still in need of the job despite the end in curbs of pandemic.

As per the Ministry of Rural Development, demand under MGNREGS has doubled in the last seven years,

Therefore, looking at the huge demand for jobs under the scheme, the government has increased the budget for the scheme over the years.

How has the Centre's allocation for MGNREGS changed over the years?

The budgetary allocation for the scheme has increased successively since 2013 from ₹32,992 crore in the 2013-14 Union Budget to ₹73,000 crore in 2021-22.

However, in recent years, the **actual expenditure on the scheme has successively been higher than the amount allocated to it at the budget stage.**

What are the challenges with the implementation of MGNREGA?

Decline in the number of days of employment: The scheme provides 100 days of employment per household per year. However, since 2016-17, on average, less than 10% of the households completed 100 days of wage employment.

Further, the average days of employment provided per household under the MGNREGS fell to a five-year low this financial year.

Increasing Budgetary allocation: Every year the budget allocation on MGNREGS increases. However, it should be at least ₹2.72 lakh crore for FY 2023-24, if the government intends to provide legally guaranteed 100 days of work per household.

Moreover, every year, about **80-90% of the budget gets exhausted within the first six months.** This causes a slowdown of work on the ground and a delay in wage payments to workers.

Delay in wage Payments: There has been delay in the payments of wage to workers, even though SC has directed the centre to release the wages on time. Wage delays also have an impact on the MGNREGA work. **For example**, vendors are reluctant to supply materials for any new work due to the delay in payments.

Minimum Wage Rate: Minimum wage rate under MGNREGS is fixed by the Centre on the basis of the **Consumer Price Index-Agricultural Labourers**. However, the type of work done by agricultural labourers and MGNREGS workers was different.

Therefore, it has been **suggested that minimum wage should be decided on the basis of the Consumer Price Index-Rural**. It is more recent and provides for higher expenditure on education and medical care.

Other issues: Fake job cards, corruption, late uploading of muster rolls, and inconsistent payment of unemployment allowance also hampers the implementation of MGNREGS.

6. [The New Great Game In The Himalayas – China's territorial disputes are as much about dominating important rivers as occupying land](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"The New Great Game In The Himalayas – China's territorial disputes are as much about dominating important rivers as occupying land"** published in **The Times of India** on **1st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: concerns associated with water sharing between India and China.

News: The article discusses the water challenges that India face from China.

What are the water challenges that India faces from China?

China's requirement of freshwater is huge and it wants to fully utilize the water for its economy. China wants to have monopoly in the emerging green technologies, build a domestic chip making industry, extract rare earth metals, etc. All these would need a huge amount of freshwater.

Moreover, China **has built dams on almost every major river** on the Tibetan plateau, including the Mekong, Salween, Brahmaputra, Yangtze, Yellow, Indus, Sutlej, Shweli and Karnali.

It has unveiled plans to build dams on the rivers that still remain free flowing, such as the Arun and the Subansiri.

Further, China also **hides hydrological data from India and** hence has plans to weaponise the sharing of water.

It has planned to **occupy all important watersheds in the Himalayas** to justify water transfer schemes and its right to use waters emanating from these watersheds.

Therefore, there are chances to have disputes not only over land but also for water between India and China.

What are the water threats for India?

Most of the major rivers of South Asia originate in the Tibetan plateau. Nearly half that water, i.e., 48%, runs directly into India.

According to sources, nearly **60% of their freshwater sources for India are contaminated**. The water in the Brahmaputra River system, the Siang, turns dirty and grey when the stream enters India from Tibet.

Further, the **Tibetan glaciers are melting** at the rate of 7% annually and two-thirds of the glaciers on the plateau will be gone by 2050.

This current trend of melting suggests that **Ganga, Indus, Brahmaputra** and other rivers across the northern India plains could **become seasonal rivers in the near future**.

Hence, India will face a major scarcity of water in the coming future and may get involve in conflict with China. Therefore, there is a hidden war already on and India needs to recognize it early.

7. [The New Great Game In The Himalayas – China’s territorial disputes are as much about dominating important rivers as occupying land](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The New Great Game In The Himalayas – China’s territorial disputes are as much about dominating important rivers as occupying land**” published in **The Times of India** on **1st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Issues

News: All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) report has revealed an increasing gender divide in the higher education.

The Covid-19 pandemic seems to have made it harder for women to achieve equality in the workforce. This is because, during the pandemic, men had more job security, and could negotiate higher wages. Furthermore, since the pandemic ended, the number of women in some classes has gone down. Also, in fields where women had made significant progress, the progress has now been reversed, reported by All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) for 2020-21. For example, the gender ratio in the [B.Com](#) course is down to 2016 levels.

Gap is increasing where the gender gap was already present and

What are the challenges to gender equality in education?

The setback in gender equality in college and university classrooms is in contrast to other developments in school education.

The ASER report, released two weeks ago, shows that parents are still interested in getting their daughters enrolled in schools.

But the gender divide in the higher education institutions is visible.

It will have a negative impact on girls’ empowerment, which could have a ripple effect on the nutrition, health and education of future generations.

What are the government steps to overcome the gender divide?

In the wake of the pandemic, the government was quick to respond to several welfare and equity-related issues, including relief packages under PMJDY and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyaan and the launch of the SVANIDHI scheme for street vendors, a large percentage of whom are women.

What more should be done?

The Centre, state governments, and educational institutions need to work together to make it easier for women to return to university.

It requires increasing funding for scholarships, building more dorms and hostels, or helping to promote social change that will make it easier for half of the country’s population to achieve their goals.

8. [A new Sino-Russian alliance: What are its implications for India?](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A new Sino-Russian alliance: What are its implications for India?**” published in **The Indian Express** on **1st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India’s interests

Relevance– India in changing global order

News– The article explains the emerging Sino-Russian alliance and its strategic implication. It also explains the Russian calculations behind the Ukraine war and its impacts.

China and Russia unveiled a **partnership “without limits” and with no “forbidden areas”** in Feb 2022. Russia and China had a **strategic partnership** for a long time. The Beijing declaration did lay out a solid basis for jointly confronting the West.

What were the Russian calculations for invading Ukraine?

Putin had hoped that his military offensive would lead to **quick collapse of the regime** in Ukraine and **occupation of Ukraine**. This will impact the European security order.

It will deeply divide Europe and fracture the **US-led trans-Atlantic security system**. After the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, occupation of Ukraine will further undermine the **credibility of the US as a global power**.

Putin's victory in Europe would have had a **dramatic impact on Asia**. It would have **weakened US alliances** in Asia and **boosted China's ambition** to radically **reshape its periphery**. China would have used force for **unification with Taiwan**.

How has the Ukraine war played out?

Ukraine's determination has prevented the **quick collapse of the regime** in Kyiv. It has helped to mobilise massive military assistance from the Western world.

Putin is **locked in a stalemate**. He has lost nearly 50% of the territory Russia gained in eastern Ukraine during the early phase of the invasion.

Russia's **military material and manpower losses** have been immense. Moscow faces a harsh regime of **Western economic sanctions**.

What are the geostrategic implications of the Sino-Russia alliance and Ukraine war?

Putin and Xi have facilitated the **Western unity under American leadership**. The Ukraine invasion has also allowed the US to put **simultaneous pressure on both China and Russia**.

In Europe, the Ukraine war has helped the US to **galvanize and expand NATO**.

The Russian invasion has also triggered the **fear of Chinese territorial expansionism in Asia**. This has led to the **strengthening of US bilateral alliances** with Australia and Japan. The US has significantly raised its **military and political support** for Taiwan.

The **Sino-Russian alliance and the Ukraine war** have seen Germany and Japan joining the battle against Moscow and Beijing.

Japan and Germany happen to be the world's third and fourth largest economies. Their mobilisation significantly alters the so-called **"balance of powers"** between the West and the Moscow-Beijing axis.

Both Berlin and Tokyo are now committed to **raising their defence spending** to deal with the security challenges from Moscow and Beijing.

Washington is **limiting the influence** of Russia and China in Eurasia by bringing its **alliances and partnerships** in Europe and Asia closer.

Leaders of America's Asian allies joined for the first time a NATO summit last June in Madrid. NATO has promised to take a greater interest in shaping the Indo-Pacific balance of power.

There is a growing prospect that Moscow will become **more beholden to Beijing** after Putin's military misadventure in Ukraine. Beijing is unlikely to abandon Moscow. A weakened Putin will remain a **valuable asset for Xi** even as Beijing seeks to limit some of the new Western hostility to China.

How is it impacting India?

China can increase the **military pressure on the disputed border** with India.

Delhi depends on **Russian military supplies** to cope with the PLA challenge and Moscow is now a junior partner to Beijing. This is certainly not a good situation for India.

Dependence on Russian arms has severely constrained **India's position on Ukraine**. It has cast a shadow over **Delhi's engagement with Europe and the US**. It is now the biggest constraint on **India's freedom of action**.

India is facing the prospect of a **unipolar Asia** dominated by a **rising and assertive China**. So, it has turned to the US and its allies to restore the **regional balance of power**.

The transition has become more urgent and complicated by the **new Sino-Russian alliance** Ukraine war.

9. [Is judicial majoritarianism justified?](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Is judicial majoritarianism justified?**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: Concerns associated with judicial majoritarianism

News: The article discusses judicial majoritarianism and issues surrounding it.

What is judicial majoritarianism?

Judicial majoritarianism refers to **numerical majorities**, i.e., number of judges supporting a judgment.

Cases in SC are usually heard either by Division Benches which consist of two judges or by Constitutional Benches which consist of five, seven, nine, 11 or even 13 judges.

Judicial majoritarianism deals with the Constitution divisions which involve a substantial interpretation of constitutional provisions. Judicial majoritarianism **helps in the decision-making process easier**.

The concept of **majoritarianism comes from Article 145(5) of the Constitution** which states that no judgment in such cases can be delivered except with the concurrence of a majority of the judges.

However, it also says that judges are free to deliver dissenting judgments or opinions.

What is the issue with Judicial majoritarianism?

Now the question comes that when all judicial decisions are based on the set rules and laws, then why is there is difference in opinion among judges.

Differences in judicial decisions can be because of differences in either the methodology adopted and the logic applied by the judges.

Since judgements are made on different methodology and logic, **there are chances that those judges giving the majority may have fallen into error of methodologies or logics**.

In such a scenario, judges who are dissenting may form a minority but their methodology applied may be correct and without errors compared to those who formed the majority.

However, those forming the minority get very little attention.

A great example is of the dissenting opinion of Justice H.R. Khanna in *A.D.M. Jabalpur v. Shivkant Shukla* (1976) upholding the right to life and personal liberty even during situations of constitutional exceptionalism.

Moreover, **the rate of dissent itself is subjected to influences**.

For example, the study found that the rate of dissent where the Chief Justice was a part of the Bench was lower than in those cases where the Chief Justice was not on the Bench.

Such instances **highlight the concerns of the efficiency of the judgments** and of the majoritarianism procedures adopted by the judiciary in deciding the case of national and constitutional importance.

What can be the way ahead?

The system proposed by Ronald Dworkin can be adopted as an alternative to judicial majoritarianism.

He proposed for a system which may either give more weightage to the vote of senior judges given that they have more experience or to the junior judges as they may represent popular opinion better.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

However, such alternatives can only be explored when the rationale behind judicial majoritarianism is questioned.

10. [India-US: The high tech boost](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India-US: The high tech boost**” published in **The Indian Express** on **2nd February 2023**.

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

Relevance– India and US bilateral relations

News– The article explains the outcome of the recent inaugural dialogue of iCET between the NSAs of US and India. It also explains iCET and the history of technological cooperation between India and the US.

What were the outcomes of the meeting between India's National Security Advisor and his American counterpart at the inaugural dialogue of iCET in Washington this week?

There was an announcement of a new road map for **deeper military and techno-economic cooperation** between the two countries.

Both announced the making of a **fighter jet engine** in India. GE Aerospace has applied for an **export licence for jet engine production** and **phased transfer of technology** to Indian entities.

What are some facts about the bilateral Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) ?

It could lend a new **strategic depth and breadth** to the **expanding engagement** between India and the United States.

The idea was first mooted in the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joe Biden on the margins of the **Tokyo summit of the Quad** last year.

The iCET involves **collaboration in a range of areas** including **quantum computing, semiconductors, 5G and 6G wireless infrastructure, and civilian space projects** such as lunar exploration.

The iCET process will be **monitored and driven** from the PMO in Delhi and the White House in Washington. It will hopefully bring **greater coherence** to this round of India-US technological engagement.

What is the history of technological cooperation between India and the US?

High technology cooperation has long been a **major focus of US-India relations**.

Early advances in **India's nuclear and space programmes** in the 1950s and 1960s involved significant inputs from the US.

But the **US nuclear sanctions** from the 1970s led to decline in bilateral high-tech cooperation. The historic **civil nuclear initiative of 2005** opened the door for renewed technological cooperation.

11. [Fire and ice – Problem facing Ladakh](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Fire and ice**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity. GS1- Regionalism

Relevance– Regional political issues

News– The people of Ladakh are on agitation for their demands.

What are the demands of agitating people in Ladakh?

They are demanding the inclusion of the region in the **Sixth Schedule under Article 244 of the Constitution**.

Other demands are restoration of **full-fledged Statehood, separate Lok Sabha seats for Leh and Kargil districts and job reservation for locals.**

They describe the demands as key to **protecting Ladakh's identity, culture and the fragile environment.**

What are the main issues facing Ladakhi people?

Soon after its creation as a UT in August 2019, Ladakh came under a bureaucracy. It has been **hostile and unresponsive** to the local population.

The **constant tussle** between locals, elected representatives of two Hill Councils of Kargil and Leh has only widened over the months.

Leh's political and religious bodies formed the Leh **Apex Body** in 2020.

In Kargil district, some political parties and Shia Muslim-affiliated seminaries joined hands in November 2020 to form the **Kargil Democratic Alliance**. It is advocating for **re-joining with the erstwhile J&K State and restoration of its special status under Article 370.**

What is the response of the centre?

The Centre appears to be in a bind. **The two committees** appointed by it to reassure the local populations have made little progress in the last two years.

Second committee appointed this year under the Minister of State has only deepened local anger. It has **no mandate to address the issues** being raised.

12. [Trading more within Asia makes economic sense](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Trading more within Asia makes economic sense”** published in **The Hindu** on **3rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements

Relevance– Trade and Economic relations across Asia

News– IMF has warned that global trade would slow down from 5.4% in 2022 to 2.4% in 2023. It calls for having a re-look at regional trade across Asia.

What are some facts and statistics about trade South Asia- East Asia Trade?

A recently published paper in an IMF says that a strong base exists for **South Asia trading more with dynamic East Asia.**

Since the 1990s, **South Asia-East Asia trade** has gathered pace. It is linked to India's trade re-aligning towards East Asia through its **'Look East' and 'Act East' policies, South Asia adopting reforms, and also China offshoring global supply chains to Asia.**

The **total merchandise trade** between South Asia and East Asia grew at about 10% annually between 1990 and 2018 to \$332 billion in 2018.

The **free trade agreements** linking economies in South Asia with East Asia may rise to 30 by 2030.

Regional trade in Asia is recovering after the COVID-19 pandemic. It has opened opportunities for South Asia to participate in global value chains and services trade.

What needs to be done for regional trade integration across Asia?

Reforms in taxation structure– Regional trade integration across Asia can be encouraged by **gradually reducing barriers** to goods and services trade. **Import tariffs and non-tariff measures** have risen in several South Asian economies since the 2008 global financial crisis.

Trade opening in South Asia should be **calibrated with tax reforms** as trade taxes account for much of government revenue in some economies.

Finance for loss making sectors and re-training of workers is also essential to promote gains from trade.

SEZs reforms– There is a need to improve the performance of special economic zones and invest in services SEZs to facilitate exports.

South Asia has over 600 SEZs in operation. These SEZs have a variable record in terms of exports and jobs and fostering domestic linkages.

SEZ reforms in South Asia require **macroeconomic and political stability, good regulatory policies towards investors, reliable electricity and 5G broadband cellular technology, and also worker skills.**

Comprehensive FTAs– These will eventually lead to the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership** to provide for a regional rules-based trade.

South Asia is a latecomer to FTAs when compared to East Asia. But, it has made a start with the **Japan-India FTA, the Sri Lanka-Singapore FTA and the Pakistan-Indonesia FTA.**

South Asian economies need to **improve tariff preference use.** They need to be better prepared in navigating the **complex rules of origin in FTAs** and including issues relevant to **global supply chains** in future FTAs.

Reinvented trade-focused BIMSTEC– It can facilitate stronger trade ties and support the interests of smaller members.

It requires **better resourcing its Secretariat, BIMSTEC FTA, trade capacity in smaller economies, and introducing dialogue partner status.**

What is the way forward for better integration?

A **narrower geographical coverage** between South Asia and Southeast Asia may be a **building block for trade integration** across Asia. The larger economies should facilitate gains from trade to the smaller economies.

There is a **need for political will** to implement **pro-trade policies** that can improve the lives of Asians.

India is South Asia's largest economy and its **G-20 presidency** can be a good platform to initiate these changes.

13. System Bails Out – Kappan finally free on bail but many aren't, in contravention of juridical principles

Source: The post is based on an article “**System Bails Out – Kappan finally free on bail but many aren't, in contravention of juridical principles**” published in **The Times of India** on **3rd February 2023.**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

News: The Kerala journalist Siddique Kappan has been freed from jail after 846 days. He was charged with Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (**UAPA**) and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (**PMLA**).

This issue highlights the concerns of prisoners who are kept in jails for a long period.

What are the concerns with the Indian laws and prisoners?

SC in recent cases has recalled **Justice Krishna Iyer's 1977 guidance** in which he called for “**Bail not jail**”.

However, many laws like the **UAPA** discourage bail and even the judiciary goes along with the pre-trial arrest and long hearing, instead of taking the responsibility of preserving the liberty of all citizens.

Furthermore, **conviction rates are low in IPC crimes**, e.g., 42.4% for murder, 28.6% for rape, and 21.9% for riots. It is the **undertrial prisoners which constitute 80% of the country's prisoners**, crowding the jails.

Most victims do not have the legal, financial and emotional resources to fight for themselves and lead out of jail.

However, if courts take action properly, then even these resources wouldn't be needed by the undertrials.

14. Two years after Myanmar coup, how the country is a mess — and India's headache has worsened

Source: The post is based on the article **"Two years after Myanmar coup, how the country is a mess — and India's headache has worsened"** published in **The Indian Express** on **4th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: India-Myanmar Relations

News: The article discusses the changing political scenario of Myanmar and its effect on the bilateral relations between India and Myanmar.

How did the political scenario of Myanmar change?

The Myanmar army seized power on February 1, 2021. The reason behind the coup was the fear that the party which won the election would rewrite the 2008 Constitution and move the powers of the military out of it.

Therefore, the Myanmar military overthrew the elected government and returned **Myanmar from democratic state to military dictatorship**.

However, the army led government/junta regime has failed to bring the country under its control. Pro-democracy civilian resistance groups (**People's Defence Forces or PDFs**) are fighting the junta and they have been joined by ethnic armed organisations (**EAOs**).

Furthermore, a National Unity Government comprising many of the elected parliamentarians has been lobbying foreign governments for diplomatic recognition.

The situation in Myanmar has turned violent.

How is the situation of Myanmar present concerns for foreign policy for India?

India has pursued a **"dual-track policy"** for over three decades with Myanmar, i.e., doing business with the junta and as well as sympathizing with the pro-democracy forces.

In the mid-1990s, **Myanmar military helped India** in securing the borders of its Northeastern states from Northeastern insurgencies. From that time, **India has had a good relation with Myanmar military rulers**.

Furthermore, India's engagement with the junta was also seen as retaining its influence in Myanmar **in the backdrop of rising threat from China**.

Now, with the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, **India is held between** supporting pro-democratic groups and military rulers. It **has its own national interest involved in it**, i.e., border security management and restricting China in Myanmar.

What are other associated concerns with India?

Obstacle in cross boundary transport: PDFs control large parts of the area in the Sagaing region through which the trilateral highway passes. There have been occasions when Indian officers had to intervene with the local PDF leaders to allow project vehicles to pass.

Obstacle in developmental project: Sittwe port in Myanmar has been developed by India as part of the Kaladan project. The port was developed with the objective of India-Myanmar maritime trade and to provide alternate access to India's landlocked north-east states.

It was said that it was ready for inauguration. However, now it seems way far.

Security concerns with the North-eastern states of India: The Myanmar coup has led the people to move out of the country. Mizoram is hosting thousands of refugees from the adjoining Chin state in Myanmar.

Moreover, the Myanmar Air Force has bombed the area on the border with Mizoram. Its effect was also seen in the state which triggered panic in the area.

Further, as per **UN Office for Drugs and Crime**, there has been a 33 percent spike in **poppy cultivation in Myanmar**. The sharpest increase has been noticed in Chin state, in an area that borders northern Mizoram and southern Manipur.

Threat to national security: The Myanmar junta has recruited Indian insurgent groups (**IIGs**) in regions adjoining Manipur and Nagaland to fight against the local PDFs and other groups. The group has been renamed as junta.

The People's Liberation Army, one of the groups of IIGs, has been held responsible by India for the deadly attack on an **Assam Rifles convoy**.

Rohingya crisis: The Myanmar military has not been able to resolve the Rohingya crisis, which has also been the cause of regional destabiliser.

Concerns with India's image: India describes itself as the “**mother of democracy**”. Its **presidency of the G20** is an opportunity to project the voice of the global south. Therefore, **India would be in a dilemma** in supporting the type of government in Myanmar and representing its stand on it globally.

What is the way ahead for India?

Despite these concerns, India has options like it can – **a)** open channels to the democratic forces and to some ethnic groups; **b)** can work more actively with ASEAN; **c)** could open an army-to-army channel with the junta; **d)** increase people to people channels; **e)** offer scholarships to Myanmar students like it did for Afghan students.

15. [On Budget 2023: Health in Amrit Kaal](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**On Budget 2023: Health in Amrit Kaal**” published in **The Indian Express** on **4th February 2023**.

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

Relevance– Health spending

News– Recently, the central government presented the budget for this year.

The total central government budget for health will be roughly Rs **86,175 crore**. It is roughly Rs 615 for every citizen. This is a **2.7% increase** from the previous fiscal year.

In real terms, the central government's health spending has declined.

What are issues with health spending in India?

A day of hospitalisation at a public hospital is estimated at Rs 2,800. At a private hospital, it is Rs 6,800. The Ministry of Health is expected to provide health services at a **low budget**. Therefore, the system fails the **most vulnerable** and they are forced to turn to the expensive private sector.

The poor, elderly and sick are already at a disadvantage. **A greater proportion of disposable incomes** is taken away from a poor household as compared to a non-poor one. It further broadens the gap between the two.

If a working member of the household falls sick, he must often withdraw from active employment. Their **main source of income** dries.

Households have to often **sell or mortgage their productive assets** to cover the treatment costs. This further reduces their capacity to bounce back.

According to the **WHO**, **55 million people** fall into poverty or deeper poverty every year due to expenditures on health.

India currently spends about **3.2% of its GDP** on health. This is much lower than the average health spending of the Lower and Middle Income Countries. It is around **5.2%** for these countries.

The government spends about Rs 2.8 lakh crore roughly **1.1% of the GDP**. In contrast, China spends 3%, Thailand 2.7%.

What is the way forward for health funding in India?

First, the National Health Mission allocates less than 3% for **non-communicable diseases**. In comparison, the allocation for **communicable diseases is three times more** and for **reproductive and child health services** about nine times greater.

The burden of disease from NCDs accounts for more than half of the total burden of disease. Greater focus on communicable diseases should be **rebalanced** now to pay attention to non-communicable diseases.

Second, public health and primary health care focus on rural areas. Urban areas have poorly developed infrastructure for primary care. **Greater resources** are needed to improve health here.

Third, health research has been neglected for too long. Spending Rs 20 per Indian is inconsistent with the **need for innovations and technologies** in the sector.

The bulk of the resources provided to the ICMR goes towards **maintaining the large pool of scientists** and the output is poor.

India should follow the example of countries where **government-funded health research** is conducted at **academic institutions**.

The government's role is to make grants and not to carry out the majority of research. **Competitive funding** will encourage the best research.

We must find ways to both find **more money for health, and also more health for the money** to ensure that all Indians achieve their true potential.

16. Charge sheet scrutiny is not a case of prying eyes

Source– The post is based on the article “**Charge sheet scrutiny is not a case of prying eyes**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Functioning of judiciary

Relevance– Issues related to Criminal justice system

News– The Supreme Court has ruled that a charge sheet filed against an accused in a criminal case is not a ‘public document’ under the ambit of the Right to Information Act 2005 or the Indian Evidence Act.

What is the reasoning provided by SC in this decision?

In the Court's view, the **charge sheet** is different from the FIR. It cannot be shared with anyone other than the accused and the victim. A charge sheet is a **comprehensive account of the crime** in question.

It has **vital information** such as a list of **prosecution witnesses and documents** in support of the investigating officer's conclusions.

The details contained in these documents even before a trial begins would be **detrimental to the accused and the victim**.

What are the arguments against the decision of the SC?

The judgement seems to contradict an order passed by the Court in **Youth Bar Association of India vs Union of India (2016)**. It directed that the FIR should be on the **relevant investigating agency's website** within 24 hours of its registration.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

In earlier days of the Republic, **confidentiality** was the tradition of the judiciary. Courts were a **sacrosanct institution**. The slightest criticism of judicial decisions **invites contempt and punishment**.

We now have a situation where judges are often **criticised in the media** for judicial decisions that are **unconventional**.

It is true that **vested interests** might engage in finding loopholes in the charge sheet to **undermine the prosecution case**.

But this should not prevent the public from **access to the charge sheet** before commencement of the trial. It should not be denied an opportunity to **evaluate the quality of an investigation**.

Critical analysis by an outsider has the potential to **enhance the soundness of an investigation**. It can prevent **prosecution against innocent individuals**.

A trial court will actually benefit from **outsider scrutiny of the prosecution case** if a charge sheet is made available to the public.

A chance for the public to study a charge sheet will ensure that **prospects of loosely framed charge sheets** will be fewer.

17. Pakistan Conundrum – Islamabad’s economic collapse won’t be good for India

Source: The post is based on the article “**Pakistan Conundrum – Islamabad’s economic collapse won’t be good for India**” published in **The Times of India** on **4th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Pakistan’s economic crisis.

News: Recently, the IMF review mission rejected Pakistan’s debt management plan and demanded a steep increase in electricity tariffs to restrict subsidies. In response, Pakistan’s PM agreed to implement the harsh conditions.

What is the status of Pakistan’s economic crisis?

Pakistan is in the midst of a deep forex crisis with reserves down to just \$3. 09 billion as of January 27. This can cover only 18 days of imports. Thus, Pakistan desperately needs to complete the pending ninth review of the IMF to avoid default.

Why Pakistan’s power sector is a cause of concern?

Pakistan’s power sector has **a) unsustainable subsidies, b) poor transmission, c) lack of accountability, c) privatisation of the power sector** led to the creation of 12 local distribution companies that mostly provided employment to military retirees, and **d) The government is also paying more than Pakistani Rs 1 trillion as Tariff Differential Subsidy.**

Why does India need to worry for Pakistan’s economic crisis?

Pakistan is also facing a new spate of home-grown terrorism. A total collapse of the Pakistani government could see the entire stretch from the Iran-Afghanistan border to Lahore becoming an extremist hotbed.

This will complicate India’s security challenges and lead to an even greater Af-Pak problem than the one the world has faced.

18. Going green – The Budget can help India transition out of its dependence on fossil fuels

Source: The post is based on the article “**Going green – The Budget can help India transition out of its dependence on fossil fuels**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Energy.

Relevance: About green initiatives in budget 2023-24.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

News: In the recent budget highlighted the government's commitment to move towards net-zero carbon emission by 2070.

What are the major green initiatives in budget 2023-24?

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

What is the rationale behind the announced green initiatives in budget 2023-24?

Inter-State transmission system for the grid integration of renewable energy from Ladakh:

With its vast stretches of barren land and one of the country's highest levels of sunlight availability, Ladakh is considered an ideal location to site photovoltaic arrays for producing a substantial capacity of solar power.

The transmission line will address the hurdle in setting up solar capacity in the region.

Viability gap funding for battery energy storage systems: Energy storage systems are crucial in power grid stabilisation and essential as India increases its reliance on alternative sources of power generation including solar and wind.

Exemption of customs duty on the import of capital goods and machinery required to manufacture lithium-ion cells: With the electric vehicle (EV) revolution poised to take off, the availability of indigenously produced lithium-ion batteries have become a necessity, especially to lower the cost of EVs.

Why India's green initiatives in budget 2023-24 is essential?

a) India holds the key to hitting global climate change targets given its sizeable and growing energy needs, **b)** With the country's population set to overtake China's this year, India's need for energy is set to surge exponentially, and **c)** The energy transition is urgent to leverage new industries, generate jobs on a sizeable scale, and add to overall economic output.

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

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

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

Relevance- Statistics about higher education in India

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

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

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

What are the discrepancies in the latest AISHE report?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About Chinese espionage capabilities.

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

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

- a) The recent one wasn’t the first Chinese surveillance balloon to be detected but was the most sophisticated one. Hence, Chinese spy tech is getting increasingly sophisticated.
- b) Last year’s docking of a Chinese spy ship masquerading as a research vessel at Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port was another example of Beijing’s growing espionage capabilities.
- c) Chinese definitions of government and civilian assets are superficial. For instance, the Chinese mentioned the balloon as a weather-monitoring device and the 2020 investigation revealed a Chinese technology firm was harvesting data on more than 10,000 influential individuals in India.

What should be done to address Chinese espionage capabilities?

- a) All cooperation with Chinese civilian agencies and businesses needs to be seen with the security of the state, b) India needs to upgrade its hi-tech counter-espionage measures, and c) the Indian government is in urgent need to step up counter-intelligence cooperation with the US and other likeminded democracies to counter China’s plans.

21. [The freedom of speech and an ‘adolescent India’](#)

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

Syllabus: GS2- Significant provisions of constitution

Relevance– Right to freedom in India

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

What is the notion of freedom of speech in India?

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

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

B.R. Ambedkar says freedom of speech exists only for those who are in favour of the **social order**. The freedom is not the **freedom of liberalism** which was expressed by Voltaire.

There is some evidence that the freedom of expression existed within **state-defined boundaries**. The content of the debates of **Adi Shankara or Saint Thirugnana Sambandar** seem remarkably liberal. Yet, this freedom did not extend to criticism of the king or his royal policies.

What is western thought on freedom of speech?

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

The freedom of speech and thought in the west was the **freedom from limits set by the state**. Bertrand Russell traces the history of free thought to its culmination.

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

How freedom of speech has evolved in India after independence?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2-Budgeting

Relevance: Infrastructure creation

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

What are the announcements in Budget related to infrastructure?

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

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

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

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

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

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

How is the Budget pushing the digital transformation?

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

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

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

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

How is the Budget pushing the Social infrastructure?

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward?

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Budgeting

Relevance: Rural development

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

What are the challenges before the economy?

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

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

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

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

How has the budget ignored rural distress?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the other issues involved with this budget?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice

Relevance: evolution of laws on child marriages in India

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

What are the highlights of the data?

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

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

What are the problems with child marriages?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, **the 1891 Act raised the age of consent for sexual intercourse to 12**. However, it was also opposed by the people of that time and was thought as interference in Hindu society. Further, in **1927 the Child Marriage Restraint Act** was introduced in the Legislative Council of India. It raised the age of marriage to 14 for girls and 18 for boys.

After Independence: The marriageable age for girls was raised to 15 in 1949 and 18 in 1978. Further, in several cases like *P Venkataramana (1977)*, *Rabindra (1986)*, *G Saravanan (2017)*,

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

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

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

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

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

What can be the way ahead?

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

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

25. Municipal Mess – From MCD to BMC, paralysis of urban local bodies undermines local governance and democracy

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

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

Relevance: About MCD mayor elections.

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

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

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

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

What is the status of other municipal corporations?

For close to a year, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) – the country's richest civic body – has been managed by an administrator after its term expired and polls were delayed. Further, 22 of 28 municipal corporations in Maharashtra have seen their terms expire without any fresh polls.

What is the performance of Municipalities?

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

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

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

26. The demand for MGNREGS work is unmet

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

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

Relevance: About the demand for MGNREGS.

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

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

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

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

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

What are the challenges in meeting the demand for MGNREGS?

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

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

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

hand, national MIS reports shows that almost all the households that demanded work were offered work.

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

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

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

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

What should be done to meet the demand for MGNREGS?

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About advance medical directives.

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

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

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

What is euthanasia?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- International Relations

Relevance– Changing geopolitics and defence ecosystem

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How is the global defence ecosystem changing?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the case of India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

29. Neglecting the health sector has consequences

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

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

Relevance– Social sector

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

What is the importance of health and education?

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

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

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

What is the status of the social sector in India?

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

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

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

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

What are indications from the budget for the health sector?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

30. A quick reset – India and Canada are looking at the big picture as they put behind discord

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

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

Relevance: About bilateral ties between India and Canada.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

31. The lesson from a court appointment drama

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

Syllabus: GS2- Structure and organisation of judiciary

Relevance– Issues related to appointment of judges

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

What is the recent controversy related to judicial appointments?

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

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

What are structural problems with the process of judicial appointments?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward to improve the appointment process?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About Indo-US “strategic partnership” in the past

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

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

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

What are the advantages of iCET?

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

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

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

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

What are the challenges faced by iCET?

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

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

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

What India needs to do to make iCET comprehensive?

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

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

33. [Exploring the blue in the India-France partnership](#)

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

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral grouping and agreements

Relevance– India and France bilateral relationship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key examples of defence cooperation are the induction of the **French Scorpene conventional submarines**, built under **technology transfer agreement of 2005**, and the **Rafale fighter jets**.

The Tata group has also tied up with Airbus to manufacture **C-295 tactical transport aircraft** in Vadodara, Gujarat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About early child marriages.

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

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

Studies from across the world and in India have shown that educational attainment and the socio-economic status of a household are the most significant correlates of child marriage.

People, mostly the poorest, are being punished through the arrests, for the state's failure to provide good quality schooling and health facilities and its inability to empower its women.

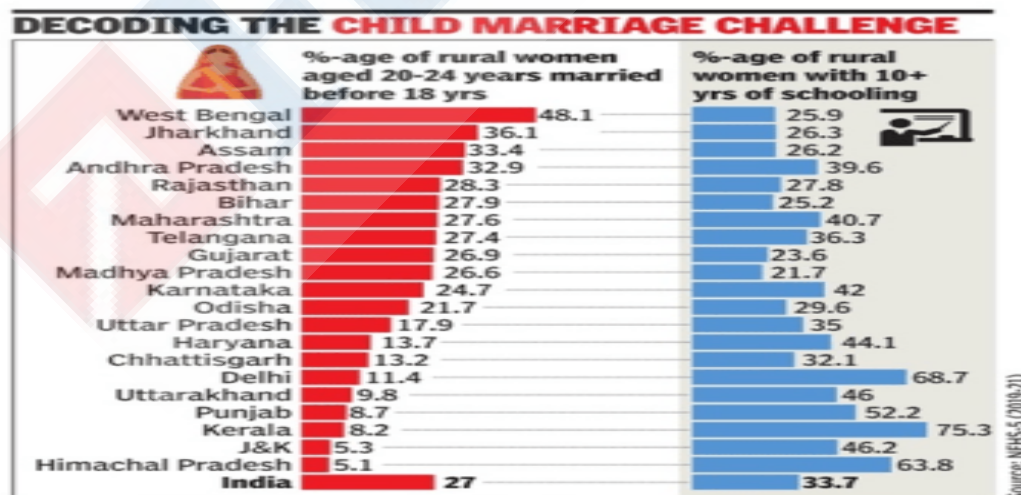
How educational backwardness in Assam led to early child marriages?

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

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

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

About child marriages in other states



Source: TOI

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

Though a Muslim girl can marry on completing 15 years or when she attains puberty according to Muslim personal law – a provision being challenged before the Supreme Court – child marriage is not exclusive to the community. According to the 2011 Census, 84% of the 12 million children (7.8 million girls) who married before 10 years in India were Hindus and mostly from rural India. There are only two states – West Bengal (48%) and Jharkhand (36%) – with a higher proportion of rural women in the 20-24 age group who were married before 18. They also have roughly the same proportion of women who did not complete more than 10 years of schooling as Assam, about 74%.

What are the other reasons for early child marriages?

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Polity

Relevance: Parliamentary Privileges and associated concerns

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

What is Article 105?

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

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

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

How did this idea of privilege originate?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

36. The demand for a Greater Tipraland by the TIPRA Motha

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: Demand for new statehood

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the genesis of this demand?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the implication of this demand on Tripura?

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance- Issues related to child labor

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

What is Domestic work?

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

What are the problems faced Domestic workers?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About Constitution as a living document.

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

About the Case recognising Constitution as a living document

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

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

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

How Supreme Court accepted the Constitution as a living document?

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

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

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

39. Competition law amendments: Of penalties and misses

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

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Governance**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, the parliamentary panel recommended that the **scope of this proposal must be limited** and the **CCI must first prove** that a facilitator intended to actively participate in a cartel. But, the 2023 Bill has expanded its scope by **removing the word ‘active’**. Hence, this might have a negative impact on those entities which may not have in fact participated, but may have only intended to participate in a cartel.

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

What is another concern with the Bill?

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

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

40. House rules and the weapon of expunction

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

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

Relevance– Rules and procedures of Parliament

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

41. Constitutional oath is not a mere formality

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

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance– Appointment of judges

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

What is the constitution?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why does the appointment of Justice raise important questions?

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

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

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

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

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

Source: The post is based on the article

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

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

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

Relevance: About the Office of Governor.

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

What are the questions surrounding the office of Governor?

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

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

About the Office of Governor

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

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

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

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

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

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

43. Japan's evolving relations with the Global South

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

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Changing foreign policy priorities of the countries

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance– Issues related to persons with disability

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

What are some statistics related to people with disabilities?

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

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

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

What is the status of accessibility of digital space?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

45. [Ladakh, a fragile region, needs autonomy](#)

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

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

Relevance– Regional political issues

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

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

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

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice

Relevance: concerns associated with tribals in India

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

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

What are the concerns associated with tribals in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are Geo-Heritage sites?

Read here: [Geological Heritage Sites](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance– Appointment of judges

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

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

Why are judges given political appointments after retirement?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

49. [India's Sri Lankan refugees need fair consideration](#)

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

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Issues related to refugees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who are Hill Tamils and what are their specific concerns?

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

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

What is the issue of the repatriation of refugees?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relevance: About the demand for smaller states.

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

About the demand for Greater Tipraland

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

Why there is a demand for smaller states?

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

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

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

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

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

How efficient are the smaller states?

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

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

51. [Freedom and the big freeze](#)

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: chilling effect and its impact

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

What is the chilling effect and civic space?

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

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

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

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

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

What are highlights of different reports?

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

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

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

What are the impacts of chilling effects on India?

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

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

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

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

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

52. Reigning over the capital, from above

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

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

Relevance– Municipal governance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the issues faced by municipalities in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance– Data availability for governance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the way forward for data accessibility for PCs?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

54. [Wrong Answer, Govts – Repeated exam paper leaks should tell authorities that technology not punishment is the cure](#)

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

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

Relevance: About government recruitment exams.

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

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

What are the other issues with government recruitment exams?

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

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

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

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

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

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

55. [The Express View: Keeping an eye on China](#)

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – India and Neighbourhood relations.

Relevance: About Chinese threat along LAC.

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

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

About Vibrant Villages Programme(VVP)

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

What is the present state of border areas along LAC?

Indian territory along the LAC had no established or limited human settlements. For instance, residents of Ladakh’s border villages have long demanded better facilities such as 4G telecommunication towers, better roads, schools with adequate facilities, and 24×7 electricity. The government also neglected people’s complaints to surrender acres of traditional grazing land to China’s [salami-slicing tactics](#). The attempted Chinese incursion in Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh last year has underlined Chinese threats along the LAC.

What are the new developments planned and developed along LAC?

Infrastructure development:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

56. **Going off-course: On the rural jobs scheme and the Centre's bid to change its funding**

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

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

Relevance: About the performance of MGNREGS.

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

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

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

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

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

What are the positive impacts of MGNREGS?

17 yeGoing off-course: On the rural jobs scheme and the Centre's bid to change its fundingsince the implementation of the MGNREGS studies have asserted its net positive impact in rural areas. These include, **a)** reducing poverty through providing off-season employment, **b)** improving household consumption among the invariably poor citizens who avail the scheme, **c)** acting as insurance during monsoon deficient seasons, and **d)** allowing greater food security through increased productivity by the works generated.

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

What are the challenges associated with the performance of MGNREGS?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should be done to improve the performance of MGNREGS?

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

57. **A Bigger Idea Of India – Why Indians already command economic heft of \$5 trillion and how we can leverage this**

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian diaspora.

Relevance: About the Indian diaspora’s wealth.

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

About the Indian diaspora’s economic wealth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

58. **EC Needs A Smart Focus – Cooling-off periods are impractical in social media age**

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

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

Relevance: About cooling-off periods before polls.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

59. [Special Marriage Act: What is the Act, how does it work, what is the notice period?](#)

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: Special Marriage Act, 1954

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

What is the Special Marriage Act, 1954?

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

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

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

Who can get married under the Special Marriage Act?

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

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

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

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

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

What is the procedure for a civil marriage under SMA?

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

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

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

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

Section 7 deals with “Objection to marriage”.

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

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

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

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

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

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

60. The protest test in India-Iran ties

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

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: India and Iran bilateral relations

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

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

How has been the relations between India and Iran?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

61. Missing link in UGC's foreign university plans to set up campuses in India

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

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

Relevance: Higher education

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

What are arguments against foreign university campuses in India?

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

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

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

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

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

The courses offered in foreign institutes have **strong interdis-ci-plinary components** that branch into **skill-development and vocational trai-ning**. Indian students who wish to bring their skills on a par with **global in-d-ustry re-quirements**, would prefer to go to a university's home campus.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

India should address the **skilling needs** of its population. For **vocational skills**, it should look tow-a-rds the **German, Swiss, Austrian and Sin-g-a-porean apprentice systems for inspiration**.

The gover-nment must first focus on implementing its landmark announcements as the **Nat-ional Research Foundation and the alloca-tion of 25% of the defense R&D bud-get** for higher education system and the private sector in an effective way.

62. [Changes in organ transplant rules: A new lease of life](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Changes in organ transplant rules: A new lease of life**” published in **Indian Express** on **20th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the revised guidelines for organ donation.

News: The Union Health Ministry has recently revised several guidelines related to organ donation.

What is Organ Donation?

Must read: [Organ Donation in India](#)

India’s organ transfer law recognises donations by the patient’s close relatives — parents, spouses and siblings. In case, a near relative is medically incompatible with the recipient, the pair is permitted a swap transplant with another related unmatched pair.

What are the revised guidelines for organ donation?

Read here: [Now, no age bar to register for cadaver organ transplants](#)

What are the benefits of the revised guidelines for organ donation?

Benefits of removing the upper age limit for registration: The pool of organ donors for a large section of critically ill people above 65 will be wider. Senior citizens in the age group above 65 can now register to receive donations from live donors.

Benefits of removing domicile-related restrictions: Earlier, some states either registered recipients who lived there or accorded priority to them in allocating organs. Now the new guidelines will make organs accessible for timely transplants.

Increase organ transplantation: India conducts the third-highest number of transplants in the world every year. But only 4% of the patients who require a liver, heart or kidney transplant manage to get one.

The new guidelines will increase organ transplantation percentages in India.

What are the issues with organ donation in India?

Problem with organ shortage: It is a complex problem faced by policy planners from not only India but also from nations whose healthcare systems are far better equipped than India’s.

The issue of the black market in organ donation: The majority of organ donations in the country are not by the close kin of patients. This highlights the black market which lures the desperately poor to sell their organs.

An issue with the screening committee: Donors have to convince a screening committee of their altruistic motives. But suggestions to make the proceedings of the committees more transparent have been ignored by authorities.

What should be done to address issues in organ donation in India?

India’s growing burden of lifestyle diseases might increase demand for the pool of organs. Hence, India should **increase the pool of organs** along with **regulatory creativity without compromising on ethical imperatives**.

Introduce an opt-out system: It is adopted in some western countries. Under this, all citizens will be donors unless they “opt out”. But for introducing such a system in India, the government should **improve awareness of organ donation**.

63. [All That India Can Do To Make Cancer A Less Dismal State](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**All That India Can Do To Make Cancer A Less Dismal State**” published in **The Times of India** on **20th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About cancer in India.

News: Recently, World Cancer Day was celebrated.

About cancer in India

The incidence of all cancers is estimated to increase to 15.7 lakhs by 2025. The incidence of cancer of the uterine cervix has reportedly dropped over the last 50 years from 45 to 10 per 1,00,000 population, and the HPV vaccine will likely to reduce it further. Breast cancer continues to rise in urban centres.

What are the challenges in reducing cancer in India?

- India made little progress to detect cancer early enough to reduce death rates.
- Because of high levels of pollution, India is going to witness a significant rise in rates of lung cancer in the future among non-smokers too.
- People who live in villages have much more advanced stages of cancer than their urban counterparts.
- There is also a lack of awareness and widespread use of carcinogenic products like tobacco in India.
- Cancer generally presents itself in an older age group. As human life spans increase the risk of getting cancer also rises. Older adults also have additional problems associated with ageing.

What are the steps undertaken to detect cancer in India?

Access to early detection facilities and affordable treatments have an important role in reducing cancer mortality.

The government is providing that by making primary health centres more responsive and taking attempts through Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. This will shorten the time lag between diagnoses and treatment.

What should be done to reduce cancer in India?

Compulsory Palliative care: Only an estimated 1 in 10 people who need palliative care worldwide are receiving it. In India, it is estimated that less than 2% of people with serious and chronic conditions availing palliative relief care. So, palliative care must be made part of India's healthcare agenda and should be available to all.

Focus on preventive health: For example, tobacco is implicated in one-third of India's cancers. Punitive measures and higher taxation of tobacco products as well as bans should be imposed along with strict and effective enforcement for raising awareness and tackling cultural factors.

Focus on technological solutions: Such as immunotherapy, CAR-T cell therapy and other cutting-edge treatments and technological advances.

India should work on preventing cancer, catching it early and ensuring the quality of life for those who have it.

64. [The curious case of the disqualification of a politician](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The curious case of the disqualification of a politician**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Parliament and state legislature

Relevance: Issues related to disqualification of the legislative member.

News: The Kerala High Court suspended the verdict passed by the District and Sessions Court in which the then-sitting MP of Lakshadweep was sentenced to 10 years in jail.

What is the issue?

A sitting MP of Lakshadweep was convicted by the Kavaratti sessions court on January 11. The Lok Sabha announced that he was disqualified as an MP with effect from the date of conviction. The Election Commission of India fixed a date for a by-election to that constituency.

However, the Kerala High Court stayed his conviction and sentence. The High Court said that the consequence of not suspending the conviction is drastic not just for the particular person but also for the nation. The MP then challenged the ECI's announcement in the SC of India.

What is the question before SC?

It is related to whether the person automatically will resume his **membership of the Lok Sabha**. The answer lies in deciding whether the cancellation of disqualification takes effect when the High Court suspended the conviction or from the **date of conviction and disqualification**.

What are constitutional and legal provisions regarding the disqualification of a sitting member of Parliament?

Article 102 of the Constitution contains provisions for disqualification. It specifies that a person shall be disqualified from contesting elections and being a Member of Parliament under certain conditions.

These include holding an **office of profit, being of unsound mind or insolvent, or not being a citizen of India**.

It also **authorises Parliament to make law** determining conditions of disqualifications. There are analogous provisions for members of state legislatures.

The **Representation of the People Act, 1951** provides that a person will be disqualified if convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more. The person is disqualified for a **period of imprisonment and a further six years**.

There is an exception for sitting members. They have been provided a period of three months from the date of conviction to appeal. The disqualification will not be applicable until the appeal is decided.

What are the judgements of higher courts on disqualification?

The **differential treatment of candidates** for elections and sitting members were challenged under **Article 14**. The **Supreme Court in K. Prabhakaran vs P. Jayarajan case** decided that the consequences of disqualifying a contestant and a sitting member were different.

In the case of sitting members, the strength of the party in the legislature would change. It could have an adverse impact if a government had a **thin majority**. It would also **trigger a by-election**. Therefore, it was reasonable to treat the two categories differently.

It stated that disqualification would be removed with **retrospective effect** as this would require the cancellation of election results. Therefore, the removal of disqualification would be **prospective and for future elections**.

Supreme Court in Lily Thomas vs Union of India case, 2013 stated that **Article 102 empowers Parliament** to make law regarding the disqualification of a person. If Parliament could specify conditions for disqualification, those conditions **would apply equally** to candidates and sitting members.

If a Member of Parliament was disqualified **under Article 102**, his seat shall become vacant. Therefore, the disqualification will be automatic and have immediate effect.

65. On sealed cover jurisprudence

Source: The post is based on the article “On sealed cover jurisprudence” published in “The Hindu” on 18th February 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance: Issues related to the transparent process of justice

News: The Chief Justice of India firmly refused the ‘suggestions’ offered by the government in a sealed cover on the formation of a proposed committee to enquire into the Hindenburg report on the Adani Group.

What are the issues related to the practice of routine handing over of sealed covers by the government?

It **erodes public confidence** in the ‘**open court**’ principle of justice administration.

The petitioners are unable to defend themselves. They do not know what they are supposed to defend against.

Passing on materials in a sealed cover to the court compels judges to **accept the state’s version**, that too, in cases in which the government’s narrative is under challenge.

What are the historical facts related to this practice?

The origins of sealed cover jurisprudence can be traced to **service or administrative cases**. Official service records and promotion assessments of individual personnel were received in a sealed cover in order to avoid harm to the **reputation of officers**.

The court continues to receive **confidential documents in sexual assault** cases to protect the identity of survivors. However, recently there has been a **rise in the incidence** of the government providing documents in a sealed cover.

Sealed cover documents have been received by the apex court in cases such as the Rafale jets’ purchase deal, the Assam National Register of Citizens case, the Ayodhya title dispute, the Gujarat Police ‘fake’ encounter case, the electoral bonds case, and Bhima Koregaon case.

What are the rules associated with this practice?

Supreme Court Rules, 2013 provides that the Chief Justice can direct any document to be kept confidential in a sealed cover if publication of the records is “considered to be **not in the interest of the public**”.

Section 123 of the Evidence Act of 1872 provides that the government should give a prior permission to a person who wants to give evidence “derived from unpublished official records relating to any affairs of state”.

How the Supreme Court is now witnessing a turnaround?

The SC, in the **Media One telecast ban case**, observed that the government should explain the exceptional circumstances to keep documents secret from the other party. The court has made it clear that sealed covers could be used only in a “small exception” of cases.

In the **S.P. Velumani case, 2022**; the Supreme Court criticised the Madras High Court’s decision to permit a report to remain “shrouded in a sealed cover” when the State had not even claimed any specific privilege.

The court admonished the Bihar government for attempting to give information in a sealed cover in the Muzaffarpur shelter case.

In the **Pegasus case judgement**, SC underscored that the government must prove the facts that the information sought would affect national security concerns. The state cannot get a free pass every time the issue of ‘**national security**’ is raised.

66. [Why not use Sanskrit as our first or second official language?](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Why not use Sanskrit as our first or second official language?**” published in **The Times of India** on **21st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Polity

Relevance: promoting Sanskrit as official language.

News: The article discusses measures required to make Sanskrit an official language.

Why Sanskrit should be made official language?

Sanskrit is considered the mother of all Indo-European groups of languages. It is also considered as a secular language and is not associated with any specific religion.

Sanskrit is eminently suitable because Indians use a large number of Sanskrit words when they use their regional language.

Moreover, English is the official language of Courts. However, the counsel in court argue in Hindi. Even HCs of some states have allowed to file cases in Hindi.

English has become our second official language even though hardly 2-3% Indians have fluency over English.

Hence, Sanskrit along with Hindi should be promoted by the government.

What measures are needed to make Sanskrit an official language?

The government should appoint a commission and committee of Parliament on official language as per Article 344.

Article 344 says it shall be the duty of this commission to make recommendations to the President for (a) the progressive use of the Hindi language for the official purposes of the Union; (b) restrictions on the use of English language for all or any of the official purposes.

Article 351 of the Indian Constitution states that it shall be the duty of the government to promote the spread of Hindi, wherever necessary or desirable promote Sanskrit and then other languages.

Further, Sanskrit language should be promoted through the way of education in its pure form and in phases.

Sanskrit can be introduced in the government's services and at the university level while the English language could be retained for international relations and commercial agreements.

Therefore, we need to use a language which can be understood by all people in India and Sanskrit is the best for it.

67. [Slow progress to creating a safe workplace for women](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Slow progress to creating a safe workplace for women**” published in **The Hindu** on **18th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Social empowerment. GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance: Issues related to women safety

News- Recently, there were allegations of sexual harassment against higher authorities by some women sportspersons.

What are the reasons behind sexual harassment of women at workplace?

Sexual harassment at the workplace, is both **direct and structural**. The enabling environment for reporting direct violence has shown a gradual improvement.

But, **indirect violence** remains poorly addressed. It is embedded deep in our **social and economic structures**. It is more visible in the **employment imbalance** prevalent between men and women.

More men at the workplace feel entitled to take undue advantage of the historical fact that the society is **still patriarchal** and women occupy a few of the higher positions.

The **number of women in leadership positions** is not enough to generate confidence in the female subordinates. Women in lower positions feel reluctant to air their grievances.

The **Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2020-21** shows that the participation of women in the total labour force was 25.1% in 2020-21. It is still much less when compared to men.

There is absence of an **enabling and safe working environment**. Most women do not complain of sexual harassment. The current **redress mechanism** is either **non-existent or ineffective**.

Women are more vulnerable to exploitation by their employer due to the fear of job insecurity. Which makes them vulnerable to sexual favour by employers.

Whenever allegations of sexual harassment are levelled against superior authorities, the enquiry is not done properly. Instead, an accused either resorts to **multiple litigation** to stall the due process or attempts to bring **disrepute to the victim**.

What is the way forward to address the issues of sexual harassment of women at workplace?

It is the **responsibility of the employer** to provide a safe work environment.

The short-term goals may include providing the requisite **women-friendly infrastructure**, the constitution of **internal complaint committees**, and the **spreading of awareness** about the law and procedure of grievance redress.

Medium-term goals may include the **increase of female participation in the labour force**, **improvement of tooth-to-tail ratio**, and **providing incentives** to prevent drop-outs such as paid maternity leave.

In the long-run, it is essential to address the **deep-rooted structural and cultural violence** against women.

There is a need to **develop the mindset** of treating men and women **as equals** at an early stage of character formation during childhood. Parents should respect each other and treat their girl and boy child on a par in all respects.

68. [Ladakh's winter of discontent From cheering its UT status, the region is now mired in protest](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Ladakh's winter of discontent**

From cheering its UT status, the region is now mired in protest" published in **Business Standard** on **21st February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About present issues in Ladakh.

News: Centre's policies in Ladakh highlight the political risks of neglecting local aspirations.

What are the issues in Ladakh?

In 2019, Ladakhis celebrated the region's demarcation from Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and its creation as a Union Territory. But over the past three years, locals claimed that their rights are weakening under central rule. These include **a)** Removal of local protections for land and jobs, **b)** Earlier Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council directed the affairs of the region. But now, the Council has become less relevant and is governed directly by the centre, **c)** Region's ethnic tribal demography would be overwhelmed by people from the plains settling in Ladakh in larger numbers, **d)** Increase in private investment from outside the region, and **e)** Industrial projects are apparently being approved without local consent and industry groups have explored the possibility of developing and extracting minerals found in the region. Such as gold, sulphur, borax, granite, limestone, and marble.

The Union home ministry had set up a committee to examine the above grievances. But reports suggest that little progress has been made.

Read more: [Ladakh, a fragile region, needs autonomy](#)

What are the demands of the Ladakh people?

There are demands that Ladakh should be granted statehood, just as has been promised to J&K at some later date and brought under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution as a safeguard of local rights. The Sixth Schedule, which comes under Article 244, provides for the formation of Autonomous District Councils in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.

In 2019, the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes** recommended that with tribes accounting for 97% of Ladakh's population, its distinct cultural heritage needed protection under the Sixth Schedule.

Centre's response to the demand: The Sixth Schedule is only for the North-east; for tribal areas in the rest of the country there is the Fifth Schedule, which applies to states with more than 50% tribal population.

Read more: [What is the rationale behind the demand for special constitutional status for Ladakh?](#)

What should be done?

The Centre could introduce a Bill to amend the Constitution to bring Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule. This will ensure trust among the locals and empower them as well.

69. [Rooftop Solar Photovoltaics \(RTPV\) for poverty alleviation](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article **"Rooftop solar for poverty alleviation"**, published in **Business Standard on 22nd Feb.**

GS Paper 2 – New and renewable Energy

Context: A detailed paper prepared by Infravision Foundation highlights the potential of Rooftop Solar Photovoltaics (RTPV) as the income generating source for lower income level segment.

The report proposes a Central government-sponsored scheme in the field of RTPV. It could be called Sooraj Se Rozgaari.

One such example is from China. Where, RTPV is one of the identified 10 initiatives rolled out by the government to lift rural households out of poverty.

Low-income household with limited roof space may receive a benefit anything from Rs 3,500 to Rs 6,000 per annum from the "free" sunlight.

Currently, the rooftop-subsidy programmes run by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy require consumers to bear about 60 per cent of the costs.

What is the proposed scheme for RPTVs?

The proposed scheme assumes a customer mix as shown in the image below.

CUSTOMER MIX UNDER THE SCHEME					
	Units	Low-income households	Regular income households	Institutional/ MSME	Total
No. of customers	Lakhs	100	20	8	128
System capacity per customer	kW	1	3	5	
Total installed capacity	GW	10	6	4	20
Proposed subsidy	%	100	40	20	

Source: Business Standard

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

Government involvement in this scheme will be through Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA).

IREDA empowered with government incentives, would be involved in the Bulk procurement of RTPV, through State Renewable Energy Development Agencies (SRDAs). It may reduce capital costs of RTPV due to bulk order.

SRDAs will secure state regulatory approvals on benchmark costs of RTPV, including state-specific grid-installation charges and a fair developer margin.

Local developers will market the scheme, attract the consumers, install the modules and give consumer maintenance for 15 years. Upon the consumer's order, developers will request SRDAs for necessary modules and infrastructure.

Developers will receive a fixed installation fee and yearly maintenance fees from SRDAs for their services.

Consumers will have to bear a part of the benchmark costs depending upon the category.

- Low-income households do not have to pay for any share of the costs for RTPV installation and maintenance.
- Social/institutional/small businesses bear 80 per cent of the costs,
- The households with regular incomes bear 60 per cent.

Consumer will have to agree on the share of **electricity for self-use** from the electricity generated from RTPV. **Rest of the generated electricity** will be considered as sold to SRDAs.

SRDAs will gather electricity from all participating consumers and sale this power to other discoms, large consumers, and power exchanges to maximise its revenue.

Net financial assistance from the Central government will be calculated based on the difference between the compensation paid to participating consumers and the realised sale price for electricity sold to other parties.

The proposed centralised scheme is expected to add 20 Gw of residential RTPV capacity over a five-year period.

70. The multiplier impact of more expressways

Source: This post is created based on the article "The multiplier impact of more expressways", published in Live Mint on 22nd Feb.

News: 246-km Delhi-Dausa-Lalsot section of the Delhi-Mumbai expressway was inaugurated last week. It will reduce the travel-time between Delhi and Jaipur to three hours.

The total length of 663 NHs(National Highways) has increased from about 91,287 km in March 2014 to about 144,983 km at present.

Bharatmala Pariyojana aims to develop 34,800 km of NH corridors. As of now, 11,789 km has been completed in the project.

Significance of Delhi-Mumbai expressway

- It is expected to **halve the commute time** between Delhi and Mumbai.
- Infrastructure development results in **multiplier-benefit for the economic regions** So, it could create opportunities for logistics, storage, transport and other related industries as well.
- It will **boost domestic tourism**. Tourism has a multiplier impact: Gramin Haats along the expressway can provide local farmers and craftsman a new window of opportunity.
- **Capital expenditure** is known to have a powerful multiplier effect of approx. 2.95 times.
- It also results in **social infrastructure development** for people living around highways, including education, healthcare, buildings for public use, shopping complexes etc.

71. [Discipline and discussion – on discussions in Parliament](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Discipline and discussion – on discussions in Parliament**”, published in **Indian Express** on 22nd Feb.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business

Context: Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar directed the Privileges Committee to investigate the disorderly conduct by 12 Opposition Members of Parliament. The disruption led to multiple adjournments during the first leg of the Budget session.

What are the other such examples of penalising over the discussions in Parliament?

Opposition’s slogans during Prime Minister’s 85-minute address, were blacked out.

An MP was suspended by the Chairmen for recording the proceedings on her mobile phone.

Chairman interrupted the speech of Leader of the Opposition during the Motion of Thanks to the President’s Address, several times. He repeatedly directed to “authenticate” remarks.

6 parts of speech were expunged from the Rajya Sabha records. Similarly, the speech of another Congress leader got 18 cuts.

What are the issues associated with this penalisation?

It will be the mockery of parliamentary democracy if Opposition is penalised for seeking accountability from the government.

Government has availability of all the information, over which queries are raised in Parliament. It is duty of the government to validate the authenticity of the information or the lack of it provided by an MP.

Parliamentary discipline must ensure that discussions take place, and the government provides the answers and not the opposite of it.

72. [Why Lok Sabha must have a Deputy Speaker](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Why Lok Sabha must have a Deputy Speaker**”, published in **Indian Express** on 22nd Feb.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business.

News: The Deputy Speaker has not been elected even after more than 3 years of this term of Lok Sabha. This matter has now reached the Supreme Court, which has reportedly sent notice to the Union government.

Significance of Deputy Speaker in the Lok Sabha

The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker are described in the Constitution as officers of Parliament, which signifies their importance in the parliamentary system. As per article 93, Lok Sabha members elect the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, after the election.

The Deputy Speaker is equally significant as the House Speaker, based on history. The Deputy Speaker was designated Deputy President under the Government of India Act of 1919 since the Speaker was the president of the central legislative assembly.

Since the constitution has been enacted, every Lok Sabha had a Deputy Speaker who would be elected after a few days of the election of the Speaker.

Possible reason behind non-election of Deputy Speaker?

Constitutionally, as per Rule 8 of the Rules and Procedure of Lok Sabha, the Speaker fix the date of the election of the Deputy Speaker and government has no role in it. But in reality, government initiates the political process of the consultation with other parties and works out a consensus. In the absence of speaker, Deputy Speaker has the same power as the Speaker. no appeal lies to the Speaker against a ruling given by the Deputy Speaker. He can also determine the petitions relating to disqualification under the 10th Schedule of the Constitution. Therefore, a person from the opposition on this post also comes with risks to ruling party.

73. [Turn off the tap of urban bias in rural development](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Turn off the tap of urban bias in rural development**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: reasons behind increasing urban rural disparity

News: The article discusses the increasing urban and rural disparity and the performance of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in Tamil Nadu.

What are the reasons behind increasing urban rural disparity?

Biased Policies: The disparity has increased due to bias policies made by government and institutions for urban areas.

Spill-over effect: It refers to the development of rural areas which is dependent on larger urban areas.

Hence, rural areas which are far away from the urban areas not only suffer from a lack of development but also keep falling behind rural areas which are closer to the urban areas.

Therefore, the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) was launched by the government to reduce the disparity amongst the rural urban areas in access to tap water.

What is JJM?

[Click Here to Read](#)

The safe drinking water under JJM will **a)** improve health and nutrition and **b)** reduce the workload of women and girl children while ensuring their safety.

Further, “availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” is the sixth goal in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations to be achieved by 2030. Moreover, the progress of JJM in ensuring safe tap water in rural areas of Tamil Nadu has also been influenced by urban factors.

What has been the performance of JJM in Tamil Nadu?

The data for 2022 reveal that there has been variation in the district wise coverage of tap water in Tamil Nadu.

For example, rural households in Kanchipuram, Ranipet, Vellore have better coverage of JJM, while rural households in Dharmapuri, Kallakurichi, Nagappatinam districts have not enough tap water connections.

It was found that the progress of JJM was better in those districts that have **better percentage of urban population** and districts with low urban population percentages were lagging in the implementation of the JJM.

Hence, it shows that urban rural bias exists even in accessing the basic facilities like tap water.

What can be the course of action?

The government must take additional measures to prioritise the implementation of the JJM scheme in districts with a high rural population in order to reach the goal of JJM.

This will not only help to correct urban bias but also meet the SDG goal with regard to tapping water connections by 2024.

74. [A new chapter in defence and tech](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A new chapter in defence and tech**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: India-US bilateral relations

News: India and the US have recently inaugurated the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (ICET). The launch of ICET shows that the relations between the two nations are improving.

What is ICET?

[Click Here to Read](#)

How has the relations between India and the US transformed over the years?

The US has played a significant role in India's development efforts since 1950. During the cold war, the US provided assistance to India in a range of areas.

The U.S. **helped to build India's first reactors for research and power**. It also gave training to India's nuclear scientists. However, the cooperation in nuclear areas came to an end after India's first nuclear test in 1974.

The U.S. also aided to modernise Indian education, especially engineering and management in the 1960s to help India's industrial growth. However, the Indian economy stalled in those times due to which growth wasn't witnessed.

Agriculture was the area where India got long lasting benefits from the US technologies. American S&T helped trigger **the Green Revolution** and end an era of food shortages.

Moreover, the Bangladesh War of 1971 and the 1974 nuclear tests led to a decline in the relations between India and the US for almost three decades.

However, relations became better in 1984 when India-U.S. signed MoU on sensitive technologies, commodities and information.

In 1987, the U.S. agreed to assist India's Light Combat Aircraft (Tejas) programme and allowed the sale of front-line GE 404 engines to India.

However, the non-proliferation treaty acted as hindrance between the relations of the two nations.

The US reimposed sanctions on India again in 1988 following the nuclear test conducted by India. However, by this time, China emerged as the threat to the US.

Therefore, the US decided to improve its relationship with India and the nuclear proliferation treaty was replaced by the **India-U.S. nuclear deal of 2008**. The relations between the two nations started to improve after this deal.

Till now, India has purchased U.S. weapons and systems worth billions of dollars. It is now deemed to be a Major Defence Partner and a Major Non-Nato Ally of the US.

However, India has also faced pressure under CAATSA and on account of its oil trade with Russia.

Hence, ICET will help both the countries to move ahead together in critical and emerging technologies. It has also set up a range of ambitious goals for India.

75. Bad administrators - Nasty social media brawl between IAS & IPS officers points to a larger, worrying trend

Source: The post is based on the article "**Bad administrators - Nasty social media brawl between IAS & IPS officers points to a larger, worrying trend**" published in **The Times of India** on **22nd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Role of civil services in a democracy.

Relevance: About low efficiency in the public sector.

News: Recently, an IPS officer and an IAS officer from Karnataka has involved in a verbal debate on Social media. In effect, both officers were transferred. But the clash put focus on a larger, disturbing change that civil service ethos is undergoing through participation in social media.

Why the public sector is having low efficiency?

Less man power: The parliamentary standing committee last year said that there are **22% fewer IAS officers in the country** than the sanctioned strength. The sanctioned strength is also not enough to begin with given the evolving needs of the Indian administration.

Not enough reforms and incentives: The government's lack of reforms in incentives and penalties have helped incapacity, indifference and corruption creep in.

Lack of functional independence: The permanent executive suffers a lack of functional independence from the political executive.

Social media addictions: The self-aggrandisement stimulated by social media addictions is a new challenge to the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968.

In social media, promoting work takes second place and promoting the self becomes the primary motto. Social media activities of some bureaucrats make short confessions of not just “political neutrality” but “courtesy and good behaviour”.

Not attractive private sector: The private sector still isn't attractive and big enough for breaking the charm of government services such as prestige, power and job security. This is clearly visible by too much competition for government services.

What should be done?

Governments will have to recruit more to increase manpower. To reduce the reputational damage from the social media war, serving seniors and ministers must take note and tries to end them.

76. Giving data its due – On National Data and Analytics Platform

Source– The post is based on the article “Giving data its due” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- E-governance

Relevance: Use of data for governance

News- National Data and Analytics Platform will enable policy-makers and researchers to exploit the potential of government data

What are some facts about the National Data and Analytics Platform?

It is a **transformational open data platform launched by NITI Aayog** in 2022.

NDAP provides **foundational datasets** from central and state government entities in **machine-readable formats, with a user-friendly interface and powerful analytics**.

The platform uses **cutting-edge methods** to link diverse datasets from across the government and enables the use of several types of data at once.

NDAP's target users include policymakers, civil servants, university students and researchers, journalists, innovators, and civil society groups.

The design process of NDAP was preceded by **extensive research** with diverse data users to learn about their demand for government data, and challenges faced in doing so.

Why is there a need for such a type of platform?

Public data is often stored on platforms that are difficult to use. It is available in formats that delay analysis. Data from different platforms do not speak to each other. Users cannot compare data from different departments or data gathered over time.

There are issues related to **slow updating processes and inconsistencies in data quality**. It is not always clear that the appropriate data is publicly available.

What are some positive aspects related to NDAP?

The decision-maker can access the data from different sources seamlessly linked into a **single dataset**. She can use the data and analyse it using her preferred method.

Civil servants can **save considerable time** and make her decisions **more data-driven**. The people of the state can enjoy **better governance and programme outcomes**.

NDAP has been made an **integral part of the State Support Mission of NITI Aayog**. The **state-specific portals** have been developed on the lines of NDAP. It ensures that all states are equal partners in data-driven policymaking.

NDAP strives to maintain the **principles of collaboration**. Its public access has provided opportunities for all, including states, ministries, and India's data community.

NDAP has been included in the **curriculum of officer trainees** at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie. This will enable incoming government officers to develop a **data-driven decision-making mindset**.

77. [On US-China relations](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Balloon-gate showed how tense US-China relations are ... most scary is their weak communication mechanisms**” published in **The Times of India** on **23rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: China-US relations

News: There have been lots of controversies over the spy balloon of China. It was later shot down by the US. This incident shows the growing distrust between the two countries.

What are the concerns with the relations between China and the US?

US Predominance: The shooting down of the balloon reflects that China is a threat to the US and a strong action is required to ensure continued US predominance.

Taiwan: There are very less chances of direct military conflicts between the two nations as most of the issues can be resolved by talks and agreements. However, there is considerable risk of military conflict over Taiwan.

Russia: There have been improvements in the relations between China and Russia. They declared that the two countries had a partnership with no limits. They both see the US as their common threats. Hence, China’s increasing proximity with Russia might be a concern for the relations between China and the US.

Strong leadership: China has seen a strong leadership and Xi’s self-appointment to a third term as CCP secretary general is one of its parts. Chinese leaders are now more open about saying that they don’t see convergence with every aspect of US leadership. Chinese society is also changing. Hence, strong leaders possess a threat over the relations between the two nations.

What are the implications of the relationships between the US and China on India?

Both nations see India in terms of broader strategic goals. **For example, Quad** is more about the US’s view of the role of its allies in countering China than India’s benefit.

78. [On children’s right to protect their genetic information](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “Rights at the centre”, published in **The Hindu** on 24th feb. 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Protection of Vulnerable Sections.

News: Request for DNA test of children violates child fundamental right to privacy.

United Nations General Assembly in 1958,

“Mankind owes to the child the best it can give.”

How Children’s rights have evolved and what are the challenges they are facing now?

United Nation’s Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1959. It was aimed at ensuring basic rights to all children below 18 years.

India ratified the Convention in 1992 and over the years several laws have been enacted to protect the rights of children.

The advancements in digital technologies have helped in his objective on many fronts, from registration of births, creating a legal identity to health care.

However, technological development has also led to violation of rights integral to a harmonious upbringing of a child. For example, in many cases request for DNA test of children violates child fundamental right to privacy.

What is the judicial observation in this regard?

In a petition, a man questioned his second child’s paternity. In this case, judiciary held that Genetic information sheds light on a person’s essence. This “intimate, personal information” is part of a child’s fundamental right. So, Children have the right, not to have their legitimacy questioned frivolously before a court of law.

Forensic/DNA testing should only be used as a last resort.

Further, judiciary directed courts to acknowledge that children must not be regarded as material objects.

79. [Justice.gov.in – On Court's digitisation programmes](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "Justice.gov.in", published in Times of India on 24th feb. 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Functioning of judiciary.

News: Supreme Court recently introduced live transcription of court proceedings on a screen and published the transcripts on its website.

What are the other digital initiatives of judiciary in India?

Other than that Supreme Court is already making use of virtual hearings and e-filing. Digitisation of the Bombay high court library, with its 1. 25 lakh books and records, which date back to the 1800s. Other HCs have done their bit.

In 2021 Orissa HC started a Record Room Digitisation Centre, the country's first, and by mid-2022 it had reportedly digitised almost 5. 2 lakh files.

Only last month Delhi HC introduced software for online inspection of digitised judicial files, another first.

And in a different kind of but equally important reform, Kerala HC recently published two judgments in a regional language, Malayalam.

What are the benefits of digitisation of judicial system?

Technology can make courts and records accessible to the general public, students, researchers and archivists.

It reduces their carbon footprint.

What are the challenges of digitisation of judicial system?

Digital system is also vulnerable to breaches. For example, AIIMS ransomware episode. Therefore, before digitisation security infrastructure must be made robust.

80. [How vikasvaad has lost out to centralisation of government](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "How vikasvaad has lost out to centralisation of government" published in The Indian Express on 24th February 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: issues with bureaucracy and elite institutions

News: India has taken up the G20 presidency and there have been talks about changing India. However, even among G20 nations, the condition of India is dismal.

This article discusses the reasons behind the dismal condition of India and provides an analysis of the vikasvaad of 2015.

Where does India stand amongst the G20 countries?

India's per capita is lowest within the G20. The **life expectancy in India** is second lowest. More than 30 percent of jobs in India need just primary education and 70 percent of those in the workforce have no contract.

Hardly **35 percent of male population and 18 percent of the female** population attain secondary education. India also has some of the most polluted rivers and cities.

Girls do not go to school in some areas while most cities remain unsafe for working women.

In all these matters, India stands at the bottom amongst the G20 nations and these all have brought into attention the vikasvaad of 2015.

What was Vikasvaad of 2015?

It was **aimed to reform of the top bureaucracy of the country and revamp the central scientific agencies**. Because, it is the top bureaucracy which determines the quality of people's lives.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

In India, through the IAS, IITs, IIMs and a network of central agencies are available. Power is concentrated in a few hundred top functionaries.

They are responsible for the conduct of most state functions such as managing irrigation systems, making railway engines, running universities or regulating hospitals.

The **scientists and professors are responsible** for the measurement, analysis and upgradation of most practices like estimating groundwater and tackling pollution.

The **elite institutions**, through their graduates, create new professionals, companies and agencies that bring modern services to the citizens of this country.

However, these institutions and top functionaries have not performed up to the expectations.

What are the issues with these top institutions and functionaries?

The IITs today are the same as in the 1990s, because they **remain disconnected from the states** they belong to. Most professors have little understanding of regional problems like floods and droughts, pollution, etc.

The IIT graduate is a global brand with little training or interest in nation-building or the temperament for working on hard scientific problems.

Further, the **current IAS officers are incapable of performing well** and as per changing demands of society because of their old-fashioned training and work culture.

This has been one of the reasons behind the failure of most of the departments in several states.

This has ultimately led to the coming up of a **contractual system for government works**. These are mostly taken up by the politicians and big contractors who provide low grade services.

Hence, the aim of the vikasvaad of 2015 was to dismantle this system. That could not be achieved.

Why were the aims of the vikasvaad of 2015 not accomplished?

There were various **political reasons** such as – **a)** it would diminish the power of the government by creating a more elite society, **b)** it would strengthen a diverse civil society, enhance awareness and free thinking on issues of education, health and culture, **c)** it would further develop the southern states which might affect the supremacy of central government controlling those states from the North.

81. One year of Ukraine war: India and France together for peace

Source: The post is based on the article “**One year of Ukraine war: India and France together for peace**” published in **The Indian Express** on **24th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: measured needed by India and France to prevent war

News: Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has not only caused damage to Ukraine but has also affected the global economy along with disrupting international rule of law.

This article discusses the measures required by India and France to prevent the war like situations in the world.

What are the different measures required by France and India to improve the Ukraine’s conditions and tackle other issues?

First, there is a need to **respond to the humanitarian emergency** in Ukraine. India has already taken step by participating in the international conference which raised 1 billion euros for humanitarian assistance.

Second, there is a need to work towards **diplomatic solutions**. India has done this effectively by talking to Russia on key issues such as the safety of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant.

Third, at **multilateral level**, there is a need to address the economic consequences of Russia’s war, uphold universal principles, and keep up global action on challenges such as climate change. India’s vision of “**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**” is needed in this regard.

Fourth, India's G20 presidency will act as a voice for the world because India is an independent, major power whose voice is heard across all continents and which has the capacity to act as a bridge. France and India are working together to tackle key challenges of the world.

Fifth, at the **bilateral level**, **India and France** need to join hands together and address the issues of energy, food, technology or defence. France's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier was also deployed in the Indian Ocean to carry out the "Varuna" joint exercise with the Indian Navy. Hence, both nations should come together and improve bilateral relationship and become a force for global good.

82. [Is caste discrimination so rampant in the US to warrant separate legislation?](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"Is caste discrimination so rampant in the US to warrant separate legislation?"** published in **The Indian Express** on **25th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Diaspora

Relevance: Issues faced by Indian diaspora in US

News- Recently, Seattle passed a resolution in its city council against caste-based discrimination in Indian American social life.

What is the status and historical origins of the Indian diaspora in the US?

Indians are the **second largest immigrant group** in America after the Mexicans. They went there in the late 19th century, mainly as agricultural or railroad workers.

In the early 20th century, Indian students started sailing to universities like the University of California and Cornell.

Hindus were not always welcome in America in the initial years. There was a riot in Bellingham town near Seattle in September 1907 in which a mob of white Americans attacked Hindus.

The situation has reversed now. Indians in America are now the **most desired immigrants**. They are now professionals, earned riches, and nation's public life figures.

Is caste discrimination a reality among Indian-Americans today or is it a design to malign the community?

There are **some vested interests** with **weak credentials** and **opaque funding sources**. They lead this campaign against Indian-Americans.

These include organisations like **Equality Labs**. It produced a controversial report on caste discrimination in workplaces in the US in 2018,

There are enough **federal and state legislations** in the US that prohibit any form of discrimination based on national origin, ancestry, and ethnicity. Many transnational corporations too have **strict guidelines** with regard to such discrimination.

The **Carnegie report on 'Social Relations of Indian Americans'** suggests that more than half of all Indian-Americans do not identify with caste at all.

It dismisses the Equality Labs survey. It actually says that Indian-Americans as a group are the **second most discriminated** against in America.

Groups that champion caste discrimination are generally **Hinduphobic**. They are using this discrimination card to malign the Hindu religion.

Singling out Indian-Americans in the name of caste discrimination is in itself a **discriminatory approach**.

What will be the impacts of such groups on Indian immigrants in America?

Their politics may harm the entire Indian-American community. **Apple** has included caste discrimination as one of the **prohibited aspects of employee behaviour**.

Persons of Indian origin may have **difficulties in getting jobs**.

83. [Section 153A: its use and misuse](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Section 153A: its use and misuse**” published in **The Indian Express** on **25th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Issues related to freedom of speech and expression

News- Recently, AICC spokesperson Pawan Khera was arrested by Assam Police for alleged hate speech by him.

What are some facts related to Section 153A and Section 505?

Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code penalises “promoting **enmity between different groups** on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language and doing acts **prejudicial to maintenance of harmony**”.

This is punishable with imprisonment up to **three years, or with fine, or both**. The provision was enacted in 1898 and was not in the original penal code.

Section 505 penalises statements conducing to **public mischief**.

In 1969, the offence was widely amended to enlarge its scope to prevent communal tensions. The offence was also made cognisable.

How have these laws been applied by various governments?

Hate speech laws have been invoked by governments to crack down on criticism of public functionaries and to arrest individuals.

In May last year, Marathi actor Ketaki Chitale was arrested for a [Facebook](#) post allegedly defaming NCP leader Sharad Pawar.

Data from the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** show that the rate of conviction for Section 153A is very low.

In 2020, 1,804 cases were registered. However, the **conviction rate** in 2020 was 20.2%. It suggests that the process often becomes the punishment.

What are safeguards available against misuse of these laws?

There are safeguards against its misuse. Sections 153A and 153B require **prior sanction from the government** for initiating prosecution. But this is required before the trial begins, and not at the stage of **preliminary investigation**.

The Supreme Court laid down a set of guidelines in the **Arnesh Kumar v State of Bihar, 2014** case. The police cannot automatically arrest an accused before investigation for offences that carry a sentence of less than seven years.

In a 2021 ruling, the SC said that the state will have to **prove intent for securing a conviction** under Section 153A. The SC in this case quashed an FIR against the editor of The Shillong Times, Patricia Mukhim.

As per SC, Words used in the alleged criminal speech should be judged from the **standards of reasonable, strong-minded, firm and courageous men** and not those of weak minds.

84. [Not neutral: On India's stand on Ukraine at the U.N.](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Not neutral: On India's stand on Ukraine at the U.N.**” published in **The Hindu** on **25th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: India's stand on Russia-Ukraine war

News: There has been a year since the UN General Assembly's voted on the resolution to criticise Russia on Ukraine invasion. The resolution called for a just and lasting peace.

The resolution was sponsored by more than 70 countries which demanded an immediate cessation of hostilities and appealed for accountability at international courts for rights violations and war crimes.

However, even adopting the resolution there has not been enough improvements in the situation.

Why has there not been much improvement in the situation?

The sponsors, led by the U.S., its allies, and European Union countries, did not call for peace talks because of **the status quo advantage that lies with Russian forces**.

Russia has claimed **about one-fifth of Ukrainian territory**. Hence, even Ukraine would not go for peace talks because it might lose its territories.

Belarus, which is an ally of Russia, has also suggested the peace talks. However, Russia has rejected it.

This has been the reason behind the increasing casualties in Ukraine and western sanctions have also not found favour with much of the world.

What has been the stand of India on the issue?

India has **abstained from voting** on any resolution at key UN bodies that has been critical of Russia.

India has given the reasons behind it that it wants to maintain a **strategic autonomy and has stressed on diplomacy and dialogue** as the only way forward.

It also wants to maintain neutrality and leave space for mediation.

India has decided to continue trade with Russia despite the sanctions imposed.

However, despite this, Russia has hardly given its attention to India's call that "this era is not of war" and it is also unclear if Ukraine sees India as an unbiased mediator.

85. [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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

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.

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.

86. 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.

87. 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.

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.

88. [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.

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.

89. [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.

90. 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.

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.

91. 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 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**.

92. [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,

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**.

93. 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**.

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.

94. 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.

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.

95. 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**.

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.

96. [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.

97. [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.

98. [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.**

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.**

99. 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.

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.

100. [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.

101. [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.

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.

102. [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. [Green debut – Green bonds can help lower borrowing cost](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Green debut – Green bonds can help lower borrowing cost**” published in **Business Standard** on 30th January 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economic Development

Relevance: About green bonds

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) last week for the first time issued sovereign green bonds worth Rs 8,000 crore on behalf of the Government of India.

What is the present scenario of green bonds?

The government is planning to issue such bonds worth Rs 16,000 crore this year as part of the overall market borrowing programme.

Green bonds are attracting the investors who are willing to accept **lower returns** to support green initiatives.

Even at global level, governments have used green bonds in a limited way.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), sovereign green bonds constituted only about **2 percent of the total issuance** between 2016 and 2022.

Moreover, the Indian government issued green bonds as **five- and 10-year securities**. The yields given by green bonds are lower than the regular bonds for the same tenure. This yield difference is referred to as “**greenium**”.

According to the IMF, greenium is initially lower between the two bonds but as the markets emerge the yields will increase.

Amongst those who participated in the auction of green bonds were public-sector banks, insurance companies and Foreign Institutional Investors.

Moreover, the government has constituted a Green Finance Working Committee (GFWC) for optimal utilisation of the funds raised through green bonds.

What is the Green Finance Working Committee (GFWC) and what are its functions?

GFWC will support the **Ministry of Finance (MoF)** in selecting and evaluating green projects within the framework.

It will also supervise an annual report with details on the allocation of proceeds, project details, the status of implementation, and the level of unallocated proceeds.

The committee will have **representation from relevant ministries**. It will be **chaired by the chief economic adviser to the government**.

A mechanism has been planned to ensure funds are used only for the stated purpose. The environmental impact of projects will be brought out separately.

The **proceeds will be deposited in the Consolidated Fund of India** and will be made available for green projects. For this, the MoF will maintain a separate account.

What is the way ahead?

The government has also decided to engage third-party reviewers to provide annual assessments of the funds utilized for the green projects.

Hence, **transparency is necessary** for implementing the framework because it would help lower the cost of borrowing for the government.

2. [Revisit the tax treatment of tobacco products](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Revisit the tax treatment of tobacco products**” published in **The Hindu** on **30th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance– Taxation of products that generates negative externalities

News– The article explains issues with taxation structure on tobacco products

In 2017, the **economic burden and health-care expenses** due to tobacco amounted to ₹2,340 billion, or 1.4% of GDP. But, India’s average annual tobacco tax revenue stands at only ₹537.5 billion.

Tobacco use is also the cause for nearly **3,500 deaths in India every day**. It impacts human capital and GDP growth in a negative way.

What are features of current taxation structure that are hindering efforts in regulating consumption of tobacco products?

One issue is the **overuse of ad valorem taxes**, which are not effective in reducing consumption. The GST system in India relies more on **ad valorem taxes** than the pre-GST system, which primarily used specific excise taxes.

In India, the **share of central excise duty** in total tobacco taxes decreased substantially from pre-GST to post-GST. It decreased for cigarettes from 54% to 8%, for *bidis* from 17% to 1%.

A large part of the compensation cess as well as the **National Calamity Contingent Duty** currently applied on tobacco products is specific. If specific taxes are not revised regularly to adjust for the inflation, they lose their value.

There is a **large discrepancy in taxation** between tobacco products. Despite cigarettes accounting for only 15% of tobacco users, they generate 80% or more of tobacco taxes. Bidis and smokeless tobacco have low taxes.

Bidis are the only tobacco products without a **compensation cess** under GST.

The current **six-tiered tax structure** for cigarettes is complex. It creates opportunities for cigarette companies to avoid taxes legally by manipulating cigarette lengths and filters for similarly named brands.

The GST rates on certain **smokeless tobacco ingredients** such as tobacco leaves, tendu leaves, betel leaves, areca nuts have either zero or 5%-18% GST.

Smokeless tobacco products in India are taxed ineffectively due to their small retail pack size which keeps the price low.

GST currently exempts small businesses with less than **₹40 lakh annual turnover**. Many smokeless tobacco and bidi manufacturers operate in the informal sector, which reduces the tax base on these products.

What is the way forward for effective taxation on tobacco products?

Inflation indexing should be made mandatory for any specific tax rates applied on tobacco products.

Taxes should be made **more consistent across all tobacco products**. The main principle behind tobacco taxation should be in protecting public health.

The **tiered taxation system on cigarettes** should be eliminated or reduced to two tiers, which can then be phased out over time to have a single tier.

It is important that all products that are exclusively used for tobacco making are brought under the **uniform 28% GST slab**.

The **mandatory standardised packing** should be implemented for smokeless tobacco pouches. This will also make it easier to implement graphic health warnings on the packaging.

The **GST related exemptions** should not be extended to businesses that produce or distribute tobacco products. Conditions should be imposed on these exemptions so that tobacco businesses do not benefit from them.

3. Intellectual property rights sensitivity should not be at the expense of public health obligations

Source– The post is based on the article “**Intellectual property rights sensitivity should not be at the expense of public health obligations**” published in **The Indian Express** on **30th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Issues relating to intellectual property rights

Relevance– Innovation ecosystem

News– The article explains the National IPR policy. It tells about changes introduced in the IPR ecosystem in India and issues relating to it. It also explains the rationale behind Patent Act.

What are some facts about the National IPR Policy?

The overall purpose was to spell out the government’s **comprehensive vision for the IPR ecosystem** in the country for a more innovative and creative Bharat. **Seven broad objectives** were spelt out. Three of important goals are-

To have strong and effective IPR laws, which **balance the interests of right owners with larger public interest**.

To **modernise and strengthen service-oriented IPR administration**.

To **strengthen the enforcement and adjudicatory mechanisms** for combating IPR infringements.

What are some structural and legislative changes introduced in the IPR ecosystem in the country?

The **Intellectual Property Appellate Board** was dissolved in April 2021 as part of tribunal reforms. Its jurisdiction was re-transferred to high courts.

This was followed by the establishment of **dedicated IP benches by the Delhi High Court**.

Efforts have been made to **improve the infrastructure and strength of the Indian Patent Office**.

What are the issues with the IPR ecosystem in India?

Patents have been provided in the pharmaceutical sector **at the expense of public health and national interest**. This is despite the presence of **legislative safeguards in the Patents Act** which were introduced between 1999 and 2005 to secure national interest.

Provisions such as **Sections 3(d), 53(4) and 107A of the Patents Act** were introduced to prevent the practice of “**evergreening**” of patents by pharmaceutical companies.

“**Evergreening patents**” on drugs relating to treatment of diabetes, cancers, cardiovascular continue to be granted to pharmaceutical innovator companies.

They are regularly enforced through courts at the expense of the **statutory rights of generic manufacturers**.

There is the non-application of the Supreme Court’s verdict in **Novartis AG v. Union of India & Others (2013) to prevent the evergreening** of a patent monopoly on drugs.

The Supreme Court ruling has not yielded mature outcomes from the Patent Office and subordinate courts.

The direct consequence of this is the **delayed entry of generic versions** of drugs. This adversely affects the **availability of affordable medicines** to patients in a lower middle-income country such as India.

What is the rationale behind IP legislations such as the Patents Act?

They do not exist for the sole benefit of IP right owners. The **intended beneficiary** of the underlying Patents Act is the society. It is expected to benefit from **dynamic innovation-based competition** between market players.

Patent monopolies are granted to innovators in the hope that they will disclose something **inventive and of industrial value** to the public. The public may use it without the need for a licence after the expiry of the patent.

It increases the **general pool of knowledge in the public domain**. The other economic assumption is that it is expected to trigger **innovation-driven competition** between market players.

It results in **increasing the quality options** for the consuming public.

What is the way forward?

There are **four stakeholders under the Patents Act** — the society, government, patentees and their competitors. Each of these stakeholders has **rights under the statute**.

To enforce the Act to the **exclusive benefit of patentees** abridges the legitimate rights of other stakeholders. It leads to **anti-competitive market outcomes**.

It is needed to **reform the IPR ecosystem** to attract investment. However, it should not be **at the expense of public health obligations and long-term national interest**.

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

Source: The post is based on the article “**Build, But Smartly – Infra along LAC is strategically vital. But Joshimath shows why projects must respect mountain ecology**” published in **The Times of India** on **30th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster and disaster management.

Relevance: About the infrastructure construction across LAC.

News: India is finally ramping up infrastructure development across LAC.

About India's infrastructure construction across LAC

Ever since Galwan in 2020, there has been an extra urgency to bridge the gap in infrastructure between the Indian and Chinese sides.

The government amended the Environment Impact Assessment Rules last year that exempt highway projects of strategic and defence importance that are 100 km from the borders from obtaining environmental clearance.

India's construction of a 135 km road connecting Chushul and Demchok in eastern Ladakh should be one among other projects in that strategically important area and BRO must meet the two-year construction deadline.

Read more: [Joshimath Crisis: Causes and Solutions – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the environmental concerns associated with infrastructure construction across LAC?

a) unsustainable construction, industries and tourism can bring catastrophic consequences to the fragile zone, b) Studies by Kashmir University and other organisations show that glaciers in the Leh-Ladakh region will deplete by two-thirds unless conservation efforts are stepped up, c) The glaciers in the regions are already melting faster than expected due to construction of highways and human activities.

Must read: [Land subsidence: PMO reviews situation in 'sinking' Joshimath town](#)

What should be done while creating infrastructure construction across LAC?

a) Strict protocols need to be worked out to ensure even strategic projects in sensitive regions have the least impact on the environment, b) The Joshimath crisis forced Indian troops stationed in the area to move to a different location. Therefore, infrastructure construction along LAC needs to be carefully planned and executed, not just for the environment but to ensure the projects' own longevity.

5. Warning bells – India's regulatory framework must infuse confidence in investors, savers

Source: The post is based on the article “Warning bells – India's regulatory framework must infuse confidence in investors, savers” published in **The Hindu** on **30th January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Relevance: About India's regulatory environment.

News: The latest stock market issues surrounding the Adani group highlighted challenges associated with India's regulatory environment. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) had stepped up scrutiny of the conglomerate's transactions, but there has been no official word from the markets' regulator.

Why the involvement of Public sector participation in the conglomerate is a cause of concern for India's regulatory environment?

Major state-owned banks and the LIC are key pillars of the country's financial system. a) This might trigger investor concern about broader financial sector stability, b) Deposits and life insurance policies as well as taxpayer resources that have been invested to keep the PSU lenders adequately capitalised. Investing such funds in the conglomerate will damage public trust and funds.

What should be done to improve India's regulatory environment?

Regulators could enhance credibility in India as an investment destination by tightening not just the listing requirements. Regulators must enforce strict actions in case of egregious breaches of the laws. This will infuse confidence in investors, and savers.

SEBI and the Reserve Bank of India must ensure reforms in the regulatory framework when India holds the G-20 presidency.

6. Known unknowns of the fertiliser subsidy

Source: The post is based on an article “Known unknowns of the fertiliser subsidy” published in **Business Standard** on **31st January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: concerns associated with subsidy on fertilisers

News: The government last year came up with measures to bring down the fertiliser subsidy bill. The article provides an analysis of those measures.

What were the measures proposed by the government?

First, it asked the fertiliser companies to buy up to 20 per cent of their LNG needs directly or via the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX).

Second, the government decided to review the domestic gas pricing formula, and caps rates.

What are the problems associated with the fertilizer subsidies?

Fertilizer along with food take up a huge amount of budget.

Fertilizer subsidy goes to manufacturers, mainly urea makers, to compensate them for selling fertilizer below market rates. These **fertilizer makers are the biggest consumers of imported LNG**.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

The cost of buying LNG is further growing due to the increasing global gas rates and stagnant domestic production. Due to which, the Finance Ministry had allotted Rs 1.05 trillion for 2022-23 to compensate fertilizer makers.

However, **the amount allotted for the subsidy is expected to increase further** due to the Ukraine conflict, high international prices of raw materials and finished fertilizers, currency depreciation, etc.

Moreover, a large amount of fertilizer subsidy goes to the foreign gas suppliers because **80 percent of the cost of urea is natural gas**.

Therefore, it is expected that the cost of subsidy will go up for FY24. Hence, due to these difficulties, the government came with those two proposals.

How would the first proposal for asking the fertilizer companies to buy up to 20 percent of their LNG needs will lower the subsidy costs?

It will allow **fertilizer companies to buy in a most cost-effective way** and find an exchange most suited for their purpose. This has huge potential to save on gas subsidies.

However, the government needs to change the regulations for companies to gain from this proposal.

At present, fertilizer units source LNG using a pooling mechanism managed by Gail India. But the way the pool works is that efficient fertilizer plants end up subsidizing inefficient ones.

Even if an efficient fertilizer maker gets gas from IGX under the new 20 percent sourcing rules, it would still need to pay the difference between the IGX rate and the average pool price.

This would reduce the incentive for efficient fertilizer units to seek gas outside the pool.

Therefore, the 20 percent procurement volumes should have been kept out of the pooling price mechanism.

Moreover, the government's second proposal to cap on domestic gas prices could help in reducing the pooled gas prices.

How would the second proposal of the government on capping the prices help in reducing the prices of gas?

The **Parikh Committee recommended** capping domestic gas rates, and changing the fixed prices for domestic gas from global gas benchmarks to crude oil rates.

This is because industrial customers have switched to crude-linked alternatives due to lower crude prices than gas prices.

Therefore, the adoption of recommendations could lower domestic gas prices and, thus, the pooled gas prices for fertilizer companies.

What are the challenges with India?

India has adopted these domestic policies but these domestic policies may have limited impact due to the global cause of leading to higher prices of natural gas.

The LNG production is limited and the demand is soaring all over the world which is ultimately increasing the price. Hence, the government might have to bear the burden of subsidy for a longer period.

7. Education challenges of employment

Source: The post is based on an article **"Education challenges of employment"** published in **Business Standard** on **31st January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Employment

Relevance: India's labour force participation rate and unemployment

News: The article discusses how education is associated with employment and labour participation rate in India.

What are highlights of the data?

India suffers from a **poorly educated workforce** that is confined to **poor quality jobs**. Most employment is **informal and in the unorganized sector**.

For example, 48 percent of the workforce had not cleared their 10th exams, 28 percent had cleared between the 6th and 9th standards and 20 percent had cleared only the 5th standard. Only **12 percent of the workforce was a graduate** or postgraduate whereas this ratio in the US is about 44 per cent for persons of 25 years or more.

During September-December 2022, the overall unemployment rate in India was 7.5 percent but **the unemployment rate for graduates was at 17.2 percent**.

And in the same period, nearly 40 percent of the workforce had only high school degrees, i.e., between the 10th and 12th standards.

This shows the dismal picture of India's labour force because labour participation rate decreases with less education.

How does the Labour Participation Rate (LPR) change with education?

The labor participation rate and the unemployment rate increase with education and vice versa.

For example, for those with an education between 10th and 12th standards, the LPR rose to 40 percent with the unemployment rising to 10.9 percent compared to those who are less educated. Moreover, in the US, the unemployment rate drops as the education levels rise. However, it is the opposite in India.

Furthermore, the LPR among graduates is rising in India which is a positive indication for lowering unemployment rate.

What are other problems with the employment in India?

Even though the LPR has improved for graduates, the jobs for them are not growing enough to make a difference to the composition of the workforce. They have still not reclaimed their pre-Covid share in the workforce.

Moreover, other problem with the Indian workforce is that many graduates leave India for better job opportunities abroad.

India has been unsuccessful in offering adequate jobs and enough good quality jobs to its graduates.

8. [Hedging and entrenched attitudes from India and Pakistan are a reminder that technical agreements are only a partial solution](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Hedging and entrenched attitudes from India and Pakistan are a reminder that technical agreements are only a partial solution**” published in **The Indian Express** on **31st January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- India and neighborhood relations

Relevance– India and Pakistan bilateral relationship

News– The article explains India current stand on the updation of Indus Water Treaty. It explains the important legal provisions of IWT related to negotiation of disputes. It also talks about the attitude of India towards water diplomacy

What is India's current stand on the Indus Water Treaty?

New Delhi has expressed its intention to **update the Treaty** to incorporate the lessons learnt over the last 62 years. It has given a 90-day notice to Islamabad.

It has claimed that the adamant position of Pakistan had made the **communication channels** over shared waters defunct.

India has adopted the **moderate approach of not terminating but modifying** the IWT.

It has attributed the breach of treaty to **Pakistan's unilateral decision** to approach the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Pakistan has **bypassed the mandate of Indus Commissioners**. It has violated the **dispute settlement mechanisms provided by Articles 8 and 9 of the Treaty**.

Conversations on renegotiating and upgrading the IWT began a few years ago. In 2021, a **parliamentary standing committee report** suggested renegotiating the Treaty.

What are some important legal provisions of the Indus Water Treaty?

Under **Article 60 of the Vienna Convention** on the Laws of the Treaties, a party can criticize an agreement and give notice of its intention to terminate it if the other party violates its fundamental provisions.

Article 8 of Indus Water Treaty specifies the **roles and responsibilities of the Permanent Indus Commission**.

Article 9 is relevant for **addressing any dispute** that might emerge between the two countries. It provides for the **appointment of a neutral expert** in case there is a lack of consensus among the Commissioners.

If the neutral expert believes that the difference should be treated as a dispute, it can be referred to the **Court of Arbitration**. However, the Commission has to report the facts to the two governments.

The report must state the **points of concord** in the Commission, the **views of each Commissioner** on these issues and also mention the issues of disagreement.

Only after receiving such a report can either of the governments address the issue bilaterally or through the Court of Arbitration.

What has been the attitude of India and Pakistan in case of water diplomacy?

Pakistan has shown an inclination for **third-party mediation**. India has seen Pakistan's objection to the hydel projects as a tactic to delay them.

Both countries have opted for **diplomatic hedging**. This attitude has framed the water diplomacy between the two countries as well.

Pakistan has contested the **Ratle project on the Chenab River** on grounds of design and violations of the IWT. It asked the World Bank to establish a **Court of Arbitration** to look into the project. India objected to this process by claiming that it was a **unilateral move**.

What is the way forward for water diplomacy by India and Pakistan?

We cannot look only at **legal aspects**. The **practice of diplomacy and the use of law** for explaining and justifying government actions are equally important.

The reasoning put forward by India and Pakistan requires scrutiny. **Ecological and economic concerns** are also important to understand the diplomatic fault lines.

Technically-negotiated agreements are **only partial solutions** and can put incremental strains on transboundary rivers and their ecosystems for years.

The two countries should use **bilateral dispute settlement mechanisms** to discuss the sustainable uses of water resources.

Article 7 talks about future cooperation. There is a need to **discuss the transboundary governance issues in holistic terms**. It could be the **starting point** for any potential diplomatic negotiations.

9. [21st century India needs a real-time fiscal data portal](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**21st century India needs a real-time fiscal data portal**” published in the **Livemint** on **31st January 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Relevance: About real-time fiscal data portal.

News: Former chief economic adviser in his book mentions accounting tricks that made it difficult to gauge the precise extent of the fiscal deficit. Hence, the government should make efforts for a more transparent and accessible budget for India’s citizens and investors.

Why does India need a real-time fiscal data portal?

At the moment, fiscal data in India is fragmented, incomplete, and often comes with lags. This makes it **difficult to analyse government finances** across the country comprehensively.

If local body grants provided by the Union government to states are shown as entries in the budgets of both the Union and states, it will **overstate government spending**.

Most **states do not maintain reliable and up-to-date data** on off-balance sheet spending and contingent liabilities (including liabilities on account of state level public enterprises).

Different states tend to have different budgetary classifications, making inter-state comparisons difficult.

Must read: [Economic Survey 2022-23 PDF](#)

What are the committee recommendations that demand a real-time fiscal data portal?

-A **2018 committee on fiscal statistics** appointed by the **National Statistical Commission (NSC)** argued for a complete overhaul of India’s fiscal database.

The committee found that **a)** local government accounts were simply unavailable for most states, **b)** India’s fiscal data lacks compilation, classification into suitable categories and eventual publication on a website or in printed form.

The report mentions that as many parts of the financial system have been digitized, it is possible to **build a comprehensive real-time fiscal data warehouse**.

-Over the years, a **number of Finance Commission reports** have advocated the setting up of an **apex fiscal council to aggregate fiscal data**. Such a council can help clean up public finance statistics and provide a more accurate view of the flow of public funds across the country.

Read more: [India needs to use its fiscal armoury to fight inequality](#)

What are the advantages of a real-time fiscal data portal?

The portal will **a)** inform about the funds flowing across the three tiers of government—Centre, state and local governments, **b)** be an invaluable resource to understand the Indian economy, **c)** allow India’s citizens to monitor fund flows minutely, **d)** improve the quality of reporting, thereby driving up the efficiency of public spending, **e)** allow government vendors and related businesses to plan their purchases and inventories better, **f)** help government to estimate borrowing needs of different levels of government accurately.

Hence, the government should **create a federal fiscal organization** to bring more consistent reporting standards and **a real-time fiscal data portal** that can bring about economy-wide efficiency gains, and pre-empt fiscal crises in the future.

10. [Solar energy is not the best option for India](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Solar energy is not the best option for India**” published in **The Hindu** on **1st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Energy

Relevance– Sources of energy

News– The article explains how the overemphasis on solar power is not the right option for India. It also provides arguments in support of hydropower

Why overemphasis on solar energy is not the right option for India?

The first is the **wrong comparison** of solar power with coal electricity at the **load centre**, instead of at the pithed. It costs about half that of the load centre. According to the Central Electricity Authority, moving electricity through high voltage wires is cheaper than moving coal.

The second flaw is not **comparing like with like**. Solar electricity is **intermittent** and coal electricity is continuous. There is a need to add the cost of storage by battery.

Supporters of solar power add the **environmental cost of carbon** to coal. But, now the carbon market has crashed.

The **shadow price or true economic value of coal** is even lower than its market price. The cost of labour in mining carries a **shadow price of zero**.

Some researchers estimate the cost of carbon emission in terms of **deaths due to particle pollution**. Implicitly, they only include the particulate emission cost of carbon.

The number of deaths is multiplied by a figure for the value of statistical life. It is calculated by asking potential victims about their desire to pay to avoid an **increase in probability by 10% of your death** due to pollution.

They have arrived at a **figure of ₹1 crore**. The comparable figure in the United States is ₹1.8 crore. In reality, They don't get so much compensation in case of any accident.

Thus, solar energy is **made financially viable** by leaving out storage battery costs and providing subsidies and concessions that are front loaded by the government.

What are arguments in support of hydropower?

Renewable energy in large hydro is both **low carbon and least cost**.

India has utilised only about **15% of its hydro potential** whereas the U.S. and Europe have utilised **90% and 98% of their potential**, respectively.

The **extent of utilisation of hydro potential** seems to be an index of **civilisational development and evolution**. The Three Gorges project on the Yangtze by China is the world's biggest hydro electric project.

One major reason for the stress in the power sector is the focus on renewable energy in a big way.

NTPC was a **model thermal power producer** meant to produce coal-based electricity. It is doing unrelated diversification into renewables. It is not its core competence.

11. [Expect action on our aim of carbon neutrality by 2070](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Expect action on our aim of carbon neutrality by 2070**” published in the **mint** on **1st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance– Climate change

News– The article explains the challenges in reducing emissions by developing countries. It also tells about the steps taken by India to fight climate change and the way forward to meet financial needs for a low emission path.

What are the issues in the fight against climate change?

Many developed countries have already **peaked their emissions**. But, it is an enormous task for developing countries to **achieve carbon neutrality**.

The **low carbon development strategy** is being suggested to achieve low emissions. But, it needs **appropriate technology and huge financial resources**.

Developed countries have made a commitment of funds and technology transfer. But, **resource flow and transfer of technology** is inadequate.

What are steps taken by India to fight climate change?

India is committed to **decouple emissions and economic growth** in its development strategy. Its strategy is guided by **NDCs adopted in 2015 and updated in 2022**. Country has set the target of **net-zero emissions by 2070**.

More than **40% of existing electricity** is based on non-fossil fuel resources. It is envisaged to reach **50% by 2030**.

The **total carbon stocks** in country forests are increasing. Carbon sequestered through forest and tree cover is estimated at 30.1 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide

The **vision of LiFE** seeks the rational utilisation of natural resources with transition from fossil fuels to cleaner sources of energy.

The renewable energy is covered under country provision for **priority sector lending**. **Green bonds** are gaining traction in global and domestic financial markets. SEBI has enhanced the scope of **green debt securities**.

What is the way forward to meet the financial needs for fighting climate change?

2.5 trillion is needed to meet India NDC targets by 2030. **Mobilisation of resources** from private and public resources will be vital.

A **holistic approach** is needed for scaling up resources for climate action. An **enhanced role by multilateral development banks** to catalyse private finance at **scale and reasonable cost** is imperative.

Developed countries should **assume the responsibility** of enabling access to financial resources and technology. The **G20 presidency provides** an opportunity to India to highlight **global cooperation in accessing technology and finance**.

12. Why state must cede power to communities

Source– The post is based on the article “**Why state must cede power to communities**” published in the **Business Standard** on **1st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy, GS1- Society

Relevance– Developmental model across the world

News– The article explains the reason for the broken state of affairs across the most advanced societies. It also explains the importance of community in achieving development

What are the reasons for the broken state of affairs across the most advanced societies of the world?

Large parts of the blame can be put on two types of liberalism —**classical liberalism and left liberalism**.

Classic liberalism believes in **excessive individual rights and freedoms, free markets and a limited state**. This led to the **rise of inequality and the concentration of wealth and power**. It helped the **rise of left liberalism, or progressive liberalism**. It ended up **expanding the power and role of the state** even more.

Liberalism was built on the implicit assumption that **traditional social institutions** like family, tribe, caste, and religion were **oppressive**. They need dismantling. These institutions did become oppressive as a result of giving them **excessive power**.

Currently, it is the liberal state that is the **most oppressive institution**. It is leading to broken societies.

What is the importance of communities?

The way out of this state of affairs is to **re-empower older and newer institutions** that build community. So, the role of community becomes important.

Communities should be given more powers to **provide the basic services** like health and law & order.

Community organisations will **expand livelihood opportunities** at a far lower cost and with greater alignment with community objectives than government.

Outside Europe and America, the countries that actually managed to address issues like jobs, education were **“illiberal” and largely monocultural countries** in Asia. Examples are Japan, Asean and China.

The **list of “broken” countries** now includes most of the developed West. Family, community and other social organisations have broken down in these countries.

What is the way forward for the development of Indian society?

There is a need to always **focus on strengths**. India's strengths are our strong family, caste and tribal values and affiliations. With reform and empowerment, they can deliver **better social and economic outcomes**.

Taxpayers can be encouraged to contribute a specific proportion of their post-tax incomes to a community organisation of their choice. These contributions will surely need **social audits**.

There is a need for **inheritance tax on wealthy persons** who do not leave at least 50 per cent of his posthumous wealth for charitable or social purposes.

There is no case for an **annual wealth tax**. It will just encourage the wealthy to evade and shift to **tax havens**.

An inheritance tax, with **generous exemptions** for property and cash left for family, will offer **incentives** for contributing to the betterment of society.

13. Economic survey 2022-23 highlights

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“The Economic Survey that wasn’t” published in **The Hindu** on **1st February 2023**.

“The Economic Survey’s growth forecast is a little too optimistic”, “An economic overview that scores on cogency” and “India’s Economic Survey has got back to its true and tested format” published in the **Livemint** on **1st February 2023**.

“Optimistic outlook – Higher growth will need more reforms” published in the **Business Standard** on **1st February 2023**.

“Express View on Economic Survey 2023: Reason for optimism” published in the **Indian Express** on **1st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting.

Relevance: Economic survey 2022-23 summary.

News: The government recently released the [Economic Survey](#) 2022-23. This article presents important Economic survey 2022-23 highlights.

What are the advantages of Economic Surveys?

a) The Economic Survey is the medium in the country for a rigorous, thoughtful, and nuanced discussion of new economic ideas. Such as universal basic income, economic divergence among

States, steps to improve property tax revenues using satellite technology, estimating internal migration of people, and so on.

b) It has typically been the medium to raise issues for public discussion over strategic economic matters.

c) The survey provides a report card of the government's economic performance.

What are the challenges associated with Economic Surveys?

Government is not constitutionally bound to present the Economic Survey or to follow the recommendations that are made in it.

Historically, the survey's recommendations are not always reflected in the Union Budget. Thus, surveys ended up becoming a collection of long opinion pieces on the Indian economy and economic matters.

What are the positives from the Economic survey 2022-23?

The Economic Survey 2022-23 summary highlights **1)** recovery from the pandemic-induced disruption is complete and the "GDP growth will probably lie in the range of 6.0% to 6.8%." This is due to **a)** a rebound in private consumption aided by a release of "pent-up" demand, **b)** a surge in exports in the initial months of 2022-23, and **c)** the increase in government capital expenditure, **2)** Provided some new data which increases transparency. Such as on the housing market, digital infrastructure, etc, **3)** Widened its coverage, with detailed chapters on climate change and the social sector, **4)** Places India's economic story in a global context with realism. **5)** India is entering a new era of growth, where its citizens can look forward to a better quality of life with better-equipped schools, affordable healthcare, and increased formal employment opportunities and **6)** It highlights the continuity of reforms in India. It compares the reform story of the last eight years to the 1998-2002 period. Such as "creating public goods, fostering trust-based governance, and the recent introduction of the Jan Vishwas Bill".

Must read: [Economic Survey 2022: Highlights](#)

What are the challenges highlighted by the Economic Survey 2022-23?

The Economic Survey 2022-23 summary **1)** pointed out that the 'Make in India' and manufacturing gross value added (GVA) grew only at 4% (real) even before the pandemic hit, **2)** Growth in private consumption has come at the cost of decreasing household financial savings, **3)** The economy has seen a K-shaped recovery, **4)** There is huge disguised unemployment in agriculture, **5)** Reforms since 2014 have not resulted in higher growth so far because of one shock after another, **6)** Balance-sheet stress in both the corporate and the banking sectors after the financial crisis will affect growth outcomes.

Global concerns: **1)** Rich-world central banks are likely to keep raising interest rates. While inflation has come down, it is still nowhere near their targeted 2%, **2)** Central banks have been gradually withdrawing the money they had printed and pumped into the financial system. This will keep long-term interest rates high and discourage consumption, hurting their imports and our exports, **3)** Ongoing Ukraine war could affect the global economy in multiple ways.

What are the major recommendations highlighted by the Economic Survey 2022-23?

a) Capital expenditure must grow to facilitate employment despite fiscal deficit limitations, **b)** The private sector has all the necessary pre-conditions lined up to step up. So, they need to increase private capex spending, **c)** Reforms such as goods and services tax and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code need more work to perform as desired, **d)** The money should be spent on creating assets that would boost future productivity, instead of on current consumption, **e)** Highlighted the need to harness Nari Shakti (women power), education and skilling, **f)** There was a need to dismantle LIC – license, inspection and compliance, **g)** Provide affordable, reliable and

viable power supply and **h)** Ensure energy security and energy transition for India to fully realize its potential.

Read more: [Economic Survey 2022-23 PDF](#)

The Survey emphatically states the Indian economy is well-placed to embark on a growth trajectory similar to what it experienced post-2003. But achieving sustained growth would require more policy interventions.

14. [Budget 2023 pulls off an artful balance](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Budget 2023 pulls off an artful balance**” published in **The Indian Express** on **2nd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: Budget 2023-24

News: The article discusses the concerns that the domestic economy was facing and the way this year’s budget addresses those.

What are the domestic economic concerns and how does the budget address those?

Capital expenditure and infrastructure creation: There were global uncertainties, lower consumption rates, slow exports, and tight monetary conditions.

Total public sector borrowing in 2022-23 was upwards to 9 percent of GDP and the current account deficit was widening. So, a budget was needed to push on public investment and reduce the deficit.

Therefore, **this year’s budget has taken steps towards ensuring capital expenditure and infrastructure creation**. A big public investment push was the need of the hour **to increase growth and job creation**.

Moreover, the central capex has jumped from 1.7 percent of GDP to 2.7 per cent due to the previous budgets. However, **this year’s budget is more ambitious** and has targeted central capex at 3.3 percent of GDP next year.

If achieved, **this would constitute a doubling of capex** in just four years and would help in **job creation, crowding-in private investment**, improving economic competitiveness and boosting growth.

Subsidies: Subsidies were **higher due to the pandemic and the Ukraine war**. Revenue **expenditure** used to be 4.5 times the capex allocation in 2019-20.

However, this year, **the ratio is expected to fall to about 2.5**, if the budgeted projections become productive and will fall further to two in the next year.

Fiscal consolidation: The budget has focused on consolidating **0.5 percent of GDP next year**. The budget speech has re-affirmed the central **fiscal deficit will be brought below 4.5 per cent of GDP by FY26**. This means at least 1.5 percent of GDP consolidation will be brought over the next two years. This was needed due to the higher fiscal deficit faced by the centre.

Hence, the budget has focused on all the right aspects such as improving the quality of spending, staying on a consolidation path, re-affirming medium-term fiscal targets.

However, there are still challenges present.

What are the challenges and what can be the course of action?

Tax Buoyancy: Tax buoyancy is strong this year because of increasing growth and higher inflation. However, **growth and inflation are expected to slow which could lower the tax buoyancy in the next year**.

Furthermore, to achieve this year’s target, **gross taxes would need to grow** upwards from 9 percent in the last quarter to 16 percent in the January-March quarter.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

If this year's targets are not achieved, it would further increase the target of tax buoyancy required for the next year.

Therefore, **policymakers will need to closely monitor**, so that contingency revenue plans are made in case nominal GDP or tax buoyancy don't fructify, so the capex is protected.

Absorptive capacity of states and PSU's: There is a need to focus to improve the absorptive capacity of states and PSU's because they have been lagging on capex in recent years.

Mobilising revenues: It is necessary **to double down on revenue mobilisation** in the coming years. Lower food and fertiliser subsidies in FY24 created 0.8 percent of GDP in fiscal space that was used to reduce the deficit and boost capex.

Therefore, **the focus must be on mobilising revenues** (both direct and indirect taxes) and increasing asset sales, if the deficit is to be brought down by 1.5 percent of GDP in the next two years without compromising capex.

15. Tiresome rules out, trust-based model in

Source: This post is created based on the article **"Tiresome rules out, trust-based model in"**, published in Live mint on 2nd Feb 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth

News: In her budget speech, Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman emphasized on trust-based governance.

To enhance ease of doing business for companies, FM proposed to reduce 39,000 compliances and decriminalize 3,400 legal provisions.

For achieving the above goals, government introduced Jan Vishwas Bill to amend 42 Central Acts.

Other measures for ease of doing business in India

Extension of the scope of **Digi Locker** to include business entities.

Permanent Account Number (PAN) will be made a common identifier for all digital systems of specified government agencies.

A unified filing process will be implemented to eliminate the requirement of separate submission of same information to different government agencies.

For MSMEs, the government introduced relief measures under [Vivad Se Vishwas](#).

A voluntary settlement scheme will be introduced to settle the contractual disputes of the government and government undertakings, under court's proceedings.

The government has proposed **to delegate powers under the SEZ Act** to International Financial Services Centres Authority. It will avoid dual regulation and set up a single window IT system for registration and approval from IFSCA, SEZ authorities, GSTN, RBI, SEBI and IRDAI.

Some concerns raised by industrialists

Budget had widened the tax authorities' power to withhold any refunds to a taxpayer. It could result in increasing load of over-burdened constitutional courts.

16. The social sector has been short-changed once again

Source- The post is based on the article **"The social sector has been short-changed once again"** published in **The Hindu** on **1st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Mobilisation of resources

Relevance- Fiscal policy

News- The article explains the focus of the budget. It talks about the allocation for welfare programmes of the government. It also explains the importance of welfarism.

What are the focus areas of the budget ?

It reiterates the **strategic vision** of this government in which **economic recovery and job creation** rest on increased **capital expenditure** by the government. **Welfare spending** is not the priority.

The Budget announced a **capex of ₹10 lakh crore**, a 33% increase over last year. Along with **grant-in-aid for capital assets**, the budget estimate for effective capex is now **₹13.7 lakh crore**. It is 4.5% of the GDP, up from 3.9% last year.

The government remains on its **path of fiscal consolidation**. The **fiscal deficit for FY24** is projected to be 5.9% of the GDP. It is a reduction from 6.4% for the current year.

The Finance Minister reiterated her commitment to reaching a fiscal deficit below 4.5% by 2025-26.

What is the allocation in the budget for schemes providing safety nets and better human development outcomes?

The Budgetary estimate for **food subsidy** is ₹1.97 lakh crore compared to the revised estimate of ₹2.8 lakh crore for 2022-23.

The government had already announced the withdrawal of additional provision of 5 kg of cereals per person per month through the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana**.

The existing benefits under the **National Food Security Act** continue and will now be given for free. But, this does not compensate for the reduced quantity of grains.

The MGNREGA has also seen a massive budget cut. The BE for 2023-24 is ₹60,000 crore compared to the RE of ₹89,400 crore for 2022-23.

MGNREGA wages for a few years have been not only lower than the **minimum wages**, but also the prevailing market wages for unskilled workers in rural areas. Further, there are issues of delayed payments.

Programmes that provide **nutritional support for women and children** have also seen inadequate and lower allocations. The allocation for **Saksham Anganwadi, Poshan Abhiyan** remains almost the same at ₹20,554 crore compared to the ₹20,263 crore last year.

PM-POSHAN has been allocated ₹11,600 crore compared to the RE of ₹12,800 crore for 2022-23.

Samarthya scheme, which focuses on women empowerment has been allocated ₹2,582 crore compared to the previous year's allocation of ₹2,622 crore.

Each of these schemes pertains to some of the **most vulnerable communities** and provides services that are critical to improving nutrition status.

A recent **report of the Accountability Initiative** showed that the budgets for anganwadi services and mid-day meals are over 30% less than in 2011 in real terms.

The allocations for the **National Social Assistance Programme** have also remained stagnant.

Education and health have also not seen any substantial increase. In nominal terms, the Budget of the Department of School Education has increased by 8.4% and that of the Department of Health and Family Welfare by 3.8%.

What is the importance of social sector initiatives for welfare?

The expenditure on these different **social sector initiatives** contributes in a large way to improving the lives of people in the long term as well as to economic revival.

Spending on MGNREGA or the food subsidy or pensions can **revive demand**. Providing public services in health and education improves **human development outcomes**, **increases productivity**, and **creates employment opportunities**.

The extent of **job creation by capex**, especially for wage workers, needs to be assessed. The increases in capex are to a large extent in highways and railways. These areas use **capital-intensive technologies with small wage components**.

17. [India's G20 Presidency: LiFE lessons for global markets](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's G20 Presidency: LiFE lessons for global markets**” published in **The Indian Express** on **3rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance– Sustainable development

News– The world is facing its first truly global energy crisis, with turbulent markets and sharp price spikes. It is creating difficulties for citizens, businesses and governments.

What is LiFE initiative?

It demonstrates **India's leadership on global issues** by promoting **sustainable lifestyles and consumption** choices worldwide.

LiFE initiative was launched in October 2022 **to nudge individual and collective action** to protect the environment.

This includes **making informed personal choices** such as **using public transport** more, **buying electric vehicles**, **adopting energy-efficient appliances** in homes.

What is the importance of LiFE initiative?

LiFE initiative could help **lower energy costs, carbon dioxide emissions, air pollution and inequalities in energy consumption**. The programme could potentially help put developing and advanced economies alike onto a more **sustainable path**.

Reducing emissions– IEA analysis shows that if all countries adopt the measures recommended by LiFE, it would reduce global carbon dioxide emissions by more than 2 billion tonnes by 2030. This will be **one-fifth of the emissions reductions** needed this decade to put the world on a path to net zero emissions. The measures would also save consumers globally around **\$440 billion in annual energy bills**.

Doesn't negate the strong policies action– Strong policy actions for expanding clean energy technologies. We need to do many things at once to tackle the world's environmental challenges while ensuring **secure and affordable energy supplies** for all.

That is why LiFE's recommendations become important.

Industries like steel and cement can learn from LiFE by adopting approaches that use **resources more efficiently**. Increasing the volume of recycled steel can reduce the amount of steel production that needs to be **decarbonised**.

Combines individual accountability and policy actions– We all need to make the right choices when it comes to the **environment and sustainability**. These choices should be supported by **appropriate infrastructure, incentives or information**.

For example, **public transport** must become **more efficient and readily accessible** to encourage citizens for its use. **Urban planning** needs to be optimised so individuals can live closer to work and amenities that reduce commute times and encourage walking and cycling.

Sustainable development– It's important that the environment should not be prioritised at the expense of **India's broader development agenda**. This requires a range of measures. LiFE's recommendations can help support this.

Global relevance– LiFE shouldn't be seen as only relevant to India and developing economies. Its lessons are **applicable globally**. It could make the biggest difference in advanced economies. The **global energy crisis** has led to renewed interest in **behaviour change and energy efficiency**, particularly in advanced economies.

How India's G20 Presidency represents a unique opportunity to globalise the LiFE initiative?

It provides a **knowledge-sharing platform** for other leading economies to realise the impact of LiFE's recommendations on climate change, air pollution and unaffordable energy bills.

G20 makes up nearly **80 per cent of global energy demand**. Meaningful changes by its members can make a big difference.

18. Decluttering the defence budget

Source: The post is based on an article "**Decluttering the defence budget**" published in **Business Standard** on **3rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting

Relevance: Budget 2023-24 for the defence

News: The article discusses the shortcomings of the Budget 2023-24 in the defence sector.

What are the shortcomings with the budget in the defence sector?

Decline in budgetary outlay: The defence budget, including pensions to veterans, has for the **first time fallen to below two percent of the GDP**.

The defence budget showed a rise of 13 percent over the previous year's budget. However, **this rise in the defence budget is only 1.5 percent when compared to the revised estimates for the last year**.

Moreover, capital outlay for modernisation and infrastructure development increased to 57 per cent since 2019-20. However, compared to last year's capital budget allocations, **this year's capex allocation represents a raise of barely 6 percent**.

This is inadequate because of prevailing macro-fiscal environment of high inflation and a falling rupee.

Moreover, the **defence capital allocations form a part of the capital investment** outlay in the Union Budget.

While the capital investment outlay has risen for the third year in a row by 33 percent, the rise in defence capital allocations is not upto the mark.

Inadequate distribution of the budget amongst the three services: The distribution of the capex fund amongst the three services (Airforce, Army, Navy) **is not uniform**. The allocations would have been made on the basis of roles assigned to each service by National Security Strategy (NSS).

NSS objectives would have made budget allocations more effective because that would determine the kind of warships, equipment, tanks, missiles, etc. needed for the three services. However, the current budget has allocated non-uniform fund to the three services without keeping in mind these objectives.

Inadequate allocation of the budget to other organization of the defence: The budget allocations for **the coast guard, the Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry and for the Border Roads Organisation is not as expected**. These organizations form a part of the defence ministry budget.

Therefore, the budget allocations would have been made according to their role and functions. However, this has not been done.

Hence, it would be better to allow those organizations to **have their own demand for grant or to consolidate their allocations** along with the consolidation of Defence R&D Organisation budget.

19. [A 'waterfall' for insolvency resolution](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “A ‘waterfall’ for insolvency resolution” published in the **Business Standard** on **3rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth

Relevance– Exit process of the business

News– The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has recently issued a discussion paper inviting comments on the changes it is proposing to further strengthen the IBC.

What is suggested by the discussion paper on strengthening the IBC?

It suggests proceeds up to the **liquidation value** will be distributed **in the order of priority provided in the liquidation waterfall** to secured and unsecured creditors.

Any **surplus over the liquidation value** will be ratably distributed among creditors in the **ratio of their unsatisfied claims**.

Creditors strike **different commercial bargains** with the company. All secured creditors have different levels of security interest. Some are undersecured, some are fully secured and some are oversecured.

What are the important provisions in the IBC related to realisation of debt by creditors in the insolvency process?

The insolvency law honours **pre-existing contractual relationships** between debtors and creditors. Secured creditors have priority claims on their respective security.

In recognition of the amount of security, an undersecured creditor and a fully secured creditor have **different entitlements** in an insolvency proceeding.

During the **rehabilitation stage**, the moratorium keeps the **security intact**. It will be available to the secured creditor during liquidation.

During the **liquidation stage**, the secured creditor can either take away the security and sell it on its own, or leave it with the liquidator to sell the security and receive the sale proceeds. Insolvency proceedings **generally protect the secured claim** to the extent of the value of security.

Where the secured creditor's claim **exceeds the value of the security**, the excess is treated as an **unsecured claim**.

Section 52 of the IBC allows a secured creditor to realise the security interest on its own. If **realisation exceeds the debts** due to the secured creditor, the excess has to be tendered to the liquidator.

When realisation falls short of the debt owed to the secured creditor, the unpaid debt is to be paid by the liquidator in accordance with the **waterfall under section 53**.

In the **waterfall**, debts owed to a **secured creditor** for any amount unpaid following the **realisation of security interest** ranks lower than the financial debts owed to **unsecured creditors**.

What are the issues with the liquidation process?

Data shows that the **rehabilitation process**, on average, realises Rs 177 if the company has assets valued at Rs 100.

Assuming that the creditors have a security interest over all the assets, they would get only Rs 100 if the company is liquidated or they enforce their contracts otherwise.

The surplus of Rs 77 that the **rehabilitation process** generates is meant to satisfy the unsecured claims of creditors.

The distribution of this excess has been **contentious**.

In 2019, the legislature and judiciary settled the law that creditors, whether secured or unsecured, should be paid not less than what they would receive in the **event of liquidation**.

This **allows discretion to the Committee of Creditors** to distribute the excess. The Committee has not been generous while exercising discretion.

There is a feeling that the excess is being mostly appropriated by members of the Committee.

What is the way forward?

The insolvency law generally reflects **public interest choices**. The **policy of distribution of excess** to satisfy unsecured claims should also reflect **public interest choice**.

Business needs both financial and operational credit, in the interest of availability of credit. Therefore, excess needs to satisfy **unsecured claims of financial creditors and operational creditors equitably**.

There is even a case for **prioritising unsecured claims of operational creditors** as they do not sit on the decision-making table.

There is a need to resolve the dispute by **distributing liquidation value vertically** among financial and operational creditors.

Excess resolution proceeds over the liquidation value can be **shared horizontally** among all creditors in proportion to their remaining claims.

The **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal** has urged to **consider entitlement for operational creditors**, based on the amount realised in the resolution plan over and above the liquidation value.

The discussion paper has essentially proposed a formula on these lines and equates all unsecured claims at par. Implementing this proposal can keep the **insolvency proceedings integrated, rather than making it complex**.

20. New income tax regime: A nudge on income tax mustn't become a shove

Source: The post is based on the article “A nudge on income tax mustn't become a shove” published in the **Livemint** on **3rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting.

Relevance: About the new income tax regime.

News: In the Budget 2023-24, the government introduced a new income tax regime.

About the new tax regime on Personal Income Tax

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

What are the advantages of the new income tax regime?

a) The new tax regime offers no tax-free gaps to park money, **b)** It suits persons who cannot gather the documents needed to claim deductions, **c)** Provide greater liberty on what one can do with their salaries, **d)** Rise in discretionary income could do economy a favour.

What are the concerns associated with the new income tax regime?

-Loss of revenue: The new tweaks are expected to cost the exchequer around ₹37,000 crore in lost revenue next fiscal year.

-The new income tax regime does not phase out India's old tax regime.

-Few state-run institutions depend on their tax sops for a chunk of their business would protest against the new regime.

Overall, the new regime will offer a case study in behavioural economics of Indians.

21. [The Union budget ticks all the right boxes for India Inc](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“The Union budget ticks all the right boxes for India Inc” published in the **Livemint** on **3rd February 2023**.

“Express View on Budget 2023: Adding it up” published in the **Indian Express** on **3rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting.

Relevance: Budget 2023-24 is for various sectors.

News: The government has recently presented the Union Budget 2023-24 in Parliament.

What are the major highlights of the Union Budget 2023-24?

Must read: [Union Budget 2023-24 Highlights](#)

What are the domestic economic concerns and how does the budget address those?

Read here: [Budget 2023 pulls off an artful balance](#)

Why budget 2023-24 is for various sectors?

The budget 2023-24 is a growth-oriented one. For instance, It increases consumption demand by reducing taxes.

Infrastructure is a long-term growth engine. This year’s budget increases infrastructure development by **a)** Increasing CapEx, **b)** Continuing the 50-year interest-free loan facility for states, **c)** Introducing dispute resolution under ‘Vivad se Vishwas’ to settle contractual disputes of government and public sector undertakings, **d)** Creating an urban infrastructure development fund.

All this will have a multiplier effect on demand and provide an impetus to the private-sector capital expenditure cycle.

For the MSME segment: **a)** Announced a revamped credit guarantee scheme, **b)** corporates are incentivized to make timely payments to MSMEs, **c)** For MSMEs that came up short in executing government contracts during the pandemic, the government has announced a one-time refund of 95% of their forfeited security amounts.

For greener ecosystem: [Major thrust planned for green energy](#)

What are some concerns highlighted in budget 2023-24?

-The budget **continued scaling down the government’s disinvestment target**. For instance, in 2021-22, the budget had pegged proceeds from disinvestment at Rs 1.75 lakh crore. Actual proceeds stood at a mere Rs 13,627 crore. For the coming year, the budget has lowered disinvestment to Rs 51,000 crore.

-**Not provided a detailed roadmap:** The government has chosen not to provide a medium term fiscal roadmap. According to the government, “medium term projections amidst unprecedented global turbulence and headwinds may not be reliable”. But a detailed roadmap would have helped the government to align short-term measures with the goal of achieving medium-term targets.

To sum up, the budget 2023-24 is pro-growth, pro-infrastructure, pro-energy transition and pro-MSMEs as well.

22. [Co-ops Get Their Moment In The Sun](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Co-ops Get Their Moment In The Sun” published in **The Times of India** on **4th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting

Relevance: Budget 2023-24 for the cooperative sector

News: The article discusses measures announced by this year's budget to boost the cooperative sector.

What are some of the measures announced in the budget for cooperatives?

Decentralised storage capacity: The budget has announced setting up of massive decentralised storage capacity so that farmers can store their produce and receive remunerative prices by selling at an appropriate time. It will be the **world's largest grain storage facility**.

Concessions in income tax rate: The budget has announced a concessional income tax rate of 15% for cooperatives to promote the growth of new cooperative manufacturing societies.

Increase in the limit of cash deposits and loans: The budget has increased the limit of cash deposits and loans to Rs 2 lakhs in cash provided by primary agricultural cooperative societies (PACs), primary cooperative agricultural and rural development banks.

Higher Limit for TDS: Cooperative societies has been given a higher limit of Rs 3 crore for tax deducted at source (TDS) on cash withdrawals.

Relief to sugar cooperatives: The claims for payment made to sugar farmers before the assessment year 2016-17 will now be **considered an expenditure**. This is expected to provide approximately Rs 10,000 crore in relief to the sugar cooperatives.

Model bye-laws: The budget also announced that model bye-laws for PACS are being formulated. It will enable them to become multipurpose cooperatives to meet the country's diverse needs and remain financially profitable.

What are the other developments made by the government for cooperatives?

National database of cooperatives: The government is establishing a national database of cooperatives to reduce the sectoral and geographical variations.

National Cooperative Policy: A committee has been constituted by the cooperation ministry to formulate a National Cooperative Policy. It will include stakeholders' recommendations and become a link to connect the masses with the country's financial system.

National Cooperative University: The government is also working towards establishing a National Cooperative University to provide trained manpower to cooperatives.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU): Recently an MoU has been signed, enabling PACS to provide the services offered by the Common Service Centre.

Computerisation: The computerization of 63,000 agricultural cooperatives has also been started.

These are some of the measures taken up by the government. Further to read what are cooperatives: [Click Here](#).

23. [AI chatbot, my future colleague](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “AI chatbot, my future colleague” published in **The Indian Express** on **4th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT and Robotics

Relevance– AI enabled technologies

News– Over the past few months, a chatty bot has become a sensation.

What is chatbot?

It is a **generative AI or algorithm** that can be used to make content. We can type questions on Chatbot and receive written answers.

It enables the **human-machine hybrid work mode** that is slowly becoming popular.

It maintains **objectiveness** in its response and does not have **subjective biases**.

What is the potential of this technology?

ChatGPT or similar AI tools are already being **used by architects, lawyers and coders** in their workplaces.

For architects, it can **generate images of designs** based on inputs. For lawyers, it creates first **drafts of basic agreements**. It **swiftly writes simple codes** for coders.

It's also **good for examinations**. Recently, ChatGPT scored higher than many human candidates on an MBA exam at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.

Microsoft Corp has announced that it will make a **multiyear, multibillion-dollar investment in OpenAI**. It will **incorporate AI tools like ChatGPT** into all its products and make them available for other businesses to build on.

Why is there a need to be cautious about the use of this technology?

It is **no substitute for thoughtful and careful research**. Its findings cannot be relied on to substitute the judgement of a lawyer, doctor or engineer or other professionals.

It might also start **eliminating junior-level positions** in fields like law, architecture, coding and research-oriented jobs.

The **future of white-collar work** will be impacted as AI will steadily replace them. It **creates challenges** for countries like India where unemployment is already high.

24. [India's much-hyped tiger recovery needs a total reboot and official monopoly over tiger research should end'](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"India's much-hyped tiger recovery needs a total reboot and official monopoly over tiger research should end"** published in **The Times of India** on **4th February 2023**.

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

Relevance: About issues of tiger conservation.

News: According to a world-renowned conservation scientist, India has about 3,000 tigers, but with focused efforts based on the science of the tiger-prey relationship, India has the potential to hold 10,000-15,000 tigers in the wild.

Why man-animal conflict is a central problem in tiger conservation?

Man-animal conflict is a national problem. This is because **a)** competition for space is high among tigers, leading to intraspecific aggression. This causes evicted tigers to come into conflict with humans, **b)** India has 3.8 lakh sq km of suitable forests but the viable breeding tiger population is concentrated only in about 50,000 sq km area.

How to address man-animal conflict to enhance tiger conservation?

State chief wildlife wardens have enormous powers under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**. They need to take some hard decisions such as Tigers that predate and have lost the fear of humans should be immediately killed. This will mitigate the conflict by at least 70%.

This is because capturing tigers is not a solution as there are no places with abundant wild prey for tigers.

The role of forest bureaucracy should be only to protect tigers from people and people from tigers.

What are the other steps that have to be done for tiger conservation?

a) The government should take steps to increase prey density to more natural levels, **b)** National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) should remove restrictions on the tranquilising or killing of dangerous problem tigers, **c)** Adherence to habitat management principles should be based on solid science and not whims and fancies, **d)** Official monopoly over tiger research, monitoring, nature education, tourism, filmmaking, and even village relocation should end.

NTCA and India's much-hyped tiger recovery need a total reboot. For that, a new wildlife task force with experienced officials, scientists, and enlightened political leaders needs to be set up to ensure a radical overhaul of tiger conservation.

25. Certainly, uncertainty has declined – on world economy

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

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance– Global economic prospects and impact on India

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

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

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

Sharp global tightening triggered difficulties for the world economy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Things are very difficult in China right now, but there are signs of **restoration of normalcy**. The Xi regime would continue to **play the nationalism card in overcoming domestic unpopularity**. But, the experience of Russia in Ukraine will shape its behaviour.

These three factors have helped **calm financial markets**. The volatility today is lower than last year. This **restoration of macroeconomic stability** can create conditions for a period of **sustained growth** starting from 2024.

What is the way forward for businesses in India?

It is **more feasible** to make business plans because things are looking stable now.

India has a workforce that is **more tech-savvy**. This is a **good time for business building**.

26. [India's just energy transition is more than a coal story](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's just energy transition is more than a coal story**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

Relevance– Issues related to clean energy transition

News– Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P) is emerging as the key mechanism for multilateral financing by developed countries to support an energy transition in developing countries.

India is considered the next candidate for a JET-Partnership.

What are the issues with Just Energy Transition Partnership?

Energy transitions could give rise to **intra-generational, intergenerational, and spatial equity concerns**. Transitions affect **fossil-dependent jobs**, disrupt forms of **future energy access**.

It shrinks the **State's capacity** to spend on welfare programmes. Thus, it increases the **existing economic inequities** between coal and other regions.

Existing JET-P deals pay limited attention to **intra-generational inequity**, such as job losses. Among the three JET-P deals signed so far, only South Africa's deal mentions a 'just' component.

What are the difficulties faced by India in JET-P negotiations?

These have remained stalled over **coal 'phase-down'** and how to operationalise India's **just transition**. The emphasis on coal phase-down disregards the **crucial difference in energy transition** between industrialised and emerging economies.

India's transition requires significant **simultaneous growth in energy demand**. The Central Electricity Authority projects a near doubling of electricity demand by 2030. India cannot afford to put its development on hold while decarbonising.

What are the steps taken by India for clean energy?

India has set the goal of **450 GW renewable energy capacity addition and 43% RE purchase obligation by 2030**. These targets are supported through complementary policy and legislative mandates like Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act and missions like National Green Hydrogen Mission.

Fiscal incentives through production-linked incentives are provided. **Market mechanisms** like the upcoming national carbon market supports these efforts.

What is the basic requirement for clean energy transition in India?

Accelerating the pace of Renewable Energy deployment is needed to match the pace of demand growth. In 2021-22, coal power served one-third of the new demand.

Meeting India's 2030 target requires **accelerating non-fossil capacity** addition from 16 GW a year in 2022 to 75 GW a year by 2030.

What is the way forward to achieve it?

Shifting energy demand patterns– This is low hanging fruit. It will enable faster RE capacity addition.

Solarisation of agricultural electricity demand; electrification of diesel-powered MSMEs and decentralised RE for residential cooking and heating are some of the steps needed for shift in energy demand patterns.

Components of clean energy– **Domestic manufacturing** of clean energy components is critical to sustain JET, build energy self-sufficiency. Indian components are 20% costlier than Chinese components.

Giving preference to domestic components without addressing **cost competitiveness** may slow down the pace of deployment.

The way around this is to look for markets outside India as part of a JET-Partnership and to **reduce the cost gap through economies of scale**.

Optimal use of coal power– There is a need to **have a relook** at the current use of coal resources to **enhance efficiencies** until the period of phase-down. One option is to **optimise use of coal-fired power plants** closer to coal mining areas rather than based on energy demands.

This would enable coal to be used **more efficiently** because **transportation of coal** is more **energy-intensive**. It would also lead to **cheaper power and indirectly reduce emissions** due to more efficient use of coal.

The **investment requirements** for this transition are beyond the means of domestic capacity of developing countries. Any future JET-P deal must consider this **broader framework for financing and supporting an energy transition**.

India's G-20 presidency is an opportunity at hand to negotiate a deal for itself while also shaping international cooperation on just energy transitions.

27. Scientists' take on the Union Budget 2023-24

Source: The post is based on an article "**Scientists' take on the Union Budget 2023-24**" published in **The Hindu** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Budget

Relevance: announcement made in the Budget 2023-24 for science and technologies.

News: The article discusses how various science and tech organizations can play the role on the announcement made in the Budget 2023-24 and concerns associated with it.

How can different organizations help in the applications of measures announced in the Budget 2023-24?

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) – CSIR has a presence on all focus areas of this year's budget. **For example**, it plays an important role in green hydrogen research and development (R&D) under the **National Hydrogen Mission**.

It focuses on National Mission to eliminate Sickle Cell Anaemia Mission by 2047 announced in the budget.

It also has an ongoing **AI programme to augment AI application in several areas**. A new programme has been launched to promote innovation in pharmaceuticals.

Ministry of Science and Technology – The budget allocated ₹2,000 crore more to the Ministry of Science and Technology than the previous budget. This is an added advantage for the development in the field of science and tech.

Department of Biotechnology (DBT) – The budget focuses on **green growth** and biotechnology plays a major role in finding sustainable solutions for this.

DBT is developing a policy framework for **'high-performance biomanufacturing'** to have world-class facilities and workforce in synthetic biology-based manufacturing practices.

It will bring improvements in healthcare's S&T with a focus on **'One Health'**.

It will operationalise the **Tuberculosis Genomic Surveillance for drug-resistance**. It is also developing a programme to genetically characterise minor millets.

However, there are also issues with this year's budget.

What are the issues with the budget?

The **current level of S&T expenditure is inadequate** if India wants to compete at the international level in knowledge generation. **Only 0.36% of the budget** has been allocated to the Ministry of S&T.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

The budget for Departments of Biotechnology and of Scientific & Industrial Research have been reduced, adjusting for inflation. **The budget for the Department of Space has also been cut by 8%.**

Moreover, the New Education Policy 2020 recommends increasing the education spending to 6% of GDP. However, **education has only received 2.5% of this budget.**

What can be the course of action?

The government needs to have better implementation procedure for the measures announced in the budget.

Along with those, there is also need to – **a)** push agritech, millet research to get nutritional benefits in the long run, **b)** open up select **Indian Council of Medical Research labs for research to the public and private sector**, **c)** support education and research on biomedical devices, pharma and AI interdisciplinary.

28. Hydropower projects in the Himalaya should be reconsidered given recent crisis

Source: The post is based on an article “**Hydropower projects in the Himalaya should be reconsidered given recent crisis**” published in **The Indian Express** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: environmental impact of hydropower project and alternative to it.

News: Joshimath land subsidence has raised concerns over the hydropower projects in Himalayas. This article discusses the impact and alternatives to hydropower.

What is a hydropower?

It is a **renewable source of energy**. It is often **considered green energy** because it generates electricity from the natural flow of water without releasing any emissions. It **does not rely on fossil fuels**.

However, it also brings concerns and threats to the environment, especially in the Himalayan region.

What are the concerns with the Hydropower projects?

Most countries in the Himalayan region, including India have built or are planning to build hydropower projects in the Himalaya. The Indian government has identified hydropower as a key renewable energy source.

However, the construction of the hydropower in Himalayas brings various concerns.

The concerns are – **a)** can **bring conflicts** over water resources in the region, **b)** can **disrupt the flow of rivers**, leading to changes in water temperature and chemistry, **c)** dams can also **cause erosion, landslides**, and sedimentation which can have a negative impact on the local environment, **d)** Dams also **disrupt the migration patterns of fish and other aquatic** species and impact the local wildlife, **e)** large-scale dams **displace local communities**, affecting their livelihoods and cultural heritage and impacting the overall well-being of the local population. Therefore, it is beneficial to look for alternatives to hydropower projects.

What can be the alternative to hydropower?

Micro hydro is a small-scale hydroelectric power generation system that generates up to 100 kilowatts (kW) of electricity.

These systems use the energy of falling water to generate electricity. They **can be used for various applications** such as powering homes, businesses, and small communities.

They are **less expensive to build and maintain** than large hydroelectric dams and have a smaller environmental footprint.

They **can be located even in inaccessible areas** where it is difficult to transmit electricity from larger power stations and can provide a reliable source of energy to communities that are not connected to the grid.

They can be used to minimise the ecosystem's negative impact and provide sustainable energy solutions. However, even they have some impact on the environment but the impacts are less when compared to large hydropower dams.

29. The tax gambit – Government should not stop nudging people towards safe, long-term savings

Source: The post is based on the article **“The tax gambit – Government should not stop nudging people towards safe, long-term savings”** published in **The Hindu** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting.

Relevance: About new income tax system.

News: During the budget speech, the government introduced the new income tax system.

What is the new income tax system?

Read here: [New tax regime gives spending flexibility](#)

The new system was based on the thought that the individual is the best judge of his/her income.

What are the advantages of the new income tax system?

Read more: [New income tax regime: A nudge on income tax mustn't become a shove](#)

Why new income tax system's idea of the individual is the best judge of his/her income is flawed?

Though, the statement is individually valid the lower income earners will not benefit a lot from the system. This is because, **a)** Lower income earners do not save enough to avail of the tax exemptions and end up paying higher rates, **b)** India's low literacy and financial literacy levels will make taxpayers' mix of consumption and savings complicated, **c)** Adult humans do not behave as rationally as economists and invest in inflation-beating investments, **d)** Financial products are routinely mis-sold to those not equipped to understand market nuances and the risks embedded, **e)** India's retail participation in stocks may have risen in recent years, but not everyone can handle the risks of equity markets or avoid being tricked by influencer-operators. Above all, there are no universal social security and health benefits in India. The old exemption-based regime helps guide families towards some level of prudent asset allocation to cope with life's uncertainties.

What should be done to make the new income tax system comprehensive?

Before taking away the old tax regime the government must **ensure adequate financial literacy efforts and crack down on unethical selling practices** of stocks, insurance and other financial products. Further, if such a state is achieved then the government should **revisit the idea of mandatory contributions** to provident funds and pensions.

30. [Bajra Boosters – Policies promoting millets will not work unless governments address farmers' incentives](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“Bajra Boosters – Policies promoting millets will not work unless governments address farmers' incentives” published in **The Times of India** on **6th February 2023**.

“India's promotion of millets is great but will likely fail” published in the **Live Mint** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country.

Relevance: About promotion of millets.

News: In the recent budget speech, Finance Minister praised millets as noble food and mentioned the government's initiatives for the promotion of millets.

What are Millets?

Must read: [What are Millets?](#)

Why promotion of millets deserves a special push?

The modern world is a slave to sugary foods: Glucose is a simple form of sugar. The faster food becomes sugar, the more appealing it is to consumers. Hence, rice and wheat succeeded faster. They have killed or diminished the lives of hundreds of millions of people by injecting them with too much sugar.

On the other hand, millets turn into glucose inside body slowly. This is also why they are considered healthy.

Millets, like rice and wheat, have a high ratio of carbohydrates. But they also have fibre. The amount of fibre present in millet slows the conversion of food into glucose.

Note: *After the stomach converts food into glucose and releases it into the bloodstream, the pancreas release insulin, which sends glucose to the cells for energy, reducing the sugar level in the blood. But when a person releases a high amount of glucose into the bloodstream for several years, the cells begin to defy the hormone and do not absorb as much glucose as they are supposed to.*

As a result, many destructive things occur. Organs marinate in high blood sugar for hours, which damages them; the excess sugar is eventually converted into fatty acids and stored in the fat cells of various body parts.

Read here: [Multidimensional benefits associated with enhancing millet cultivation](#)

How government is promoting millets?

-In 2013, the government launched a **crop diversification programme** to shift acreage away from paddy in the original Green Revolution regions, Punjab, Haryana and western UP. Later, the Haryana government even offered a **cash subsidy of Rs 7,000/acre to shift cultivation** to alternate crops.

Read here: [Centre, States to join hands to promote millets consumption and Centre formulates action plan to promote exports of millets and value-added products of millets](#)

What should be done to promote millets?

Inclusion of millets in Public Distribution System and MSP: The government has to guarantee a floor price for millets. This will disincentivise rice and wheat cultivation.

The world's largest food security scheme covering about 800 million people is giving more attention to rice and wheat. This has to shift in favour of the promotion of millets.

Read here: [A region-specific strategy and their introduction in mid-day meals could boost millets cultivation](#)

31. [Green growth push – New initiatives have long-term potential](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Green growth push – New initiatives have long-term potential” published in the **Business Standard** on **6th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation.

Relevance: About the green growth push in the Budget 2023-24.

News: The Union Budget has focussed on many green growth push initiatives that can lead to an environmentally conscious lifestyle.

What are the initiatives in the budget that focus on the green growth push?

Green growth has been listed among the seven priorities of the Budget for 2023-24.

Read more: [Major thrust planned for green energy](#)

The other initiatives include **a)** incentivising the use of green hydrogen and biofuels; **b)** conserving natural ecological safeguards like mangroves and wetlands; **c)** introducing concepts like green credit; and **d)** striving for an appreciable reduction in sources of pollution through measures like replacing polluting vehicles with non-polluting ones and chemical fertilisers with organic manures.

What is the rationale behind the announced green growth push initiatives in the Budget?

Read here: [Going green – The Budget can help India transition out of its dependence on fossil fuels](#)

-The bulk of the Energy Transition Fund would be at the disposal of the oil-marketing companies to enable them to switch to new and renewable sources of energy.

-The allocation of funds for the National Green Hydrogen Mission is expected to make India a net exporter of green hydrogen.

What are the advantages of the government’s green growth push?

The government’s heavy expenses will be paid back sooner and have the potential to pay lasting dividends. For instance, in the solar-energy sector, the payback time in the case of alternative sources of energy is rapidly shrinking due to the constant inflow of cost-effective and more efficient technologies.

32. [Jammu, village defence and governance](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “Jammu, village defence and governance” published in **The Hindu** on **7th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance– Security situation in Jammu and Kashmir

News– There is a rise in terror-related strikes in the relatively peaceful Jammu division, especially in the border districts. Recently, the government decided to revive Village Defence Committees(VDCs).

What are some facts associated with VDCs?

VDCs were set up to instil a **sense of self protection**. The district’s superintendent of police was mandated to **exercise command and control**.

VDCs have played a crucial role in **containing militancy in the Jammu division**, after being set up in the mid-1990s.

VDC presence was concentrated **in remote areas**. Their difficult terrain and a meagre presence of security forces made chances of successful operations remote.

VDCs were trained to hold the front against militants **till the arrival of security forces.**

What were issues with these VDCs?

In several cases, the VDCs have proved to be **counterproductive.** There were instances of cadres abusing their authority. They faced allegations of **human rights violations.**

A '**false notion of power**' developed in the minds of the VDC cadre. It led to potentially adverse fallouts, leading to the decision to revive them.

What are improvements needed in VDCs?

Command and control– State policy on the VDCs must now aim to mitigate the negatives. The issue should be viewed through the prism of **human resources management of the cadres.**

There needs to be an evolution of a **hands-down command and control mechanism.** The present methodology of being under the superintendent of police may not be the ideal arrangement.

A **good control mechanism** is needed to ensure that cadres remain motivated and focused.

Strengthening Panchayats– The revival of the VDC should be used as an **opportunity to empower the local bodies.** Panchayats are most suited to **understand local dynamics** in a conflict zone.

Panchayats could be entrusted with the task of assisting the local police in an **institutionalised manner.**

This will create advantages such as **quality checks** on the character of VDC cadres during the selection stage, **monitoring their activities and consolidated control** through oversight and deterrence.

Operational level measures– The VDCs should not be involved in **proactive intelligence and tactical operations.** They must instead remain confined to '**self defence and deterrence roles**'.

33. [What will drive global growth?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**What will drive global growth?**" published in **Business Standard** on **7th February 2023.**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Growth and Development

Relevance: factors responsible for growth in A-10 economies

News: The demographic shift in 10 major Asian economies (**the A-10:** China, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, Malaysia, and Taiwan) is faster than the economic transition.

The article discusses the factors that can have impact on global growth.

How has been the contribution of A-10 economies to global GDP?

The contribution of A-10 economies to global GDP growth has risen steadily. It has reached **70 percent between 2014 and 2019**, from 40 percent in the previous five years.

The main driver of this growth **has been growth rise in China** along with the steady growth in India and ASEAN economies.

There are factors that affect the global growth of GDP in the A-10 economies.

What are the factors that affect the growth?

Total Factor Productivity (TFP): TFP is a measure of efficiency which means the efficient utilization of the human and capital inputs to generate output. A substantial part of the growth deceleration in A-10 GDP between 2015 and 2019 has been **due to weaker TFP growth.**

It was strong in India and Thailand over this period, but slowed for other economies and turned negative for China. Hence, **the contribution of TFP to overall GDP growth can be large over time.**

Labour Input: Labour size **has not been a large driver of growth** for the last 15 years. Labour growth slowed to 0.4 percent a year in the 2005–14 period, and 0.3 percent between 2014 and 2019, with limited contribution to overall growth.

Therefore, even if population ageing slows down, the number of available workers would have a limited incremental impact on growth.

Capital Inputs: The **capital formation has been the largest contributor to GDP growth in the A-10 in the last two decades**. There has been considerable jump in capital use in several countries, including India, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Capital inputs are mostly affected by regulations. However, demographics also play an important role in the demand for investments, especially for real-estate and infrastructure.

China's high capital growth has been due to its focus on infrastructure spending and the surge in real estate investment.

Real estate contributes 15 per cent to China's GDP, versus around 5 per cent for the developed Asian markets with ageing populations.

Therefore, slowing capital formation in China could be a significant growth headwind for the world.

Thus, the impact of an ageing A-10 on the world is less due to labour supply, and more due to slow growth in capital deployment in demographically challenged North Asia.

Slowing total factor productivity growth in some major A-10 economies is another headwind.

What can be the way ahead for India?

India needs to learn a lesson from these observations that the GDP growth can only occur with faster growth in capital formation because labour input is hard to change and TFP changes slowly.

The real-estate cycle in India is turning positive. However, India's growth in coming years will not be large enough to affect global growth.

Hence, **policies that facilitate inbound foreign investment** can help India in its growth.

34. How are earthquakes measured and how massive is the Turkey one?

Source: This post is created based on the article “**How are earthquakes measured and how massive is the Turkey one?**”, published in Indian Express on 7th Feb, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Disaster management

News: Recently, an earthquake of magnitude 7.8 struck south-central Turkey and Northwest Syria.

Reports have put the number of fatalities in thousands. This earthquake is of the same magnitude as one that killed about 30,000 people in December 1939.

As per the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) the quake was centred about 33 km from Gaziantep, around 18 km deep.

Earth's Mechanism behind earthquakes

Earth's surface is made up of tectonic plates, which are constantly moving but at a very slow pace. These plates often get stuck or pushing against each other traps the energy. Often this energy is released by the earth in the form of waves, travelling through earth's crust that results in vibration and lead to earthquakes.

Measurement of the earthquake

Seismographs are used to record earthquakes. When the earth shakes, the recording device on seismographs records the reading of the ground motion. Now these devices work by measuring electronic changes produced by the motion of the ground with respect to the mass.

Magnitude measurement

One of the most important measures of magnitude is Richter Scale. It was devised in 1935 by Charles Francis Richter. One step up in measurement represents a tenfold increase in magnitude. Therefore, an earthquake measuring 7 on the Richter Scale has 10 times the magnitude of one measured 6.

However, Moment Magnitude Scale (denoted as Mw) was developed due to limitations of Richter scale.

Measuring the intensity

Intensity measures the amount of shaking at a particular location. There are Intensity scales, like the Modified Mercalli Scale and the Rossi-Forel scale.

Earthquakes of lower magnitude can be more intense if they are located in more shallow ground or if the area where they occur has more loose soil, etc.

The Modified Mercalli Scale, the most commonly used intensity scale, ranks earthquake intensity on a scale of I. (not felt) to XII. (extreme). The maximum intensity measured in Turkey's earthquake is IX. or violent.

35. Ballooning Options To Spy

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Ballooning Options To Spy**”, published in **Times of India** on 7th Feb, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Science and technology,

News: The Chinese airship that was shot down over US soil brought to light new spying technologies, some of which India should work on.

Advantages of Spy balloons over spy satellites

Orbits of spy satellites are almost predictable. Satellites may be relocated or moved from orbit, however this requires fuel, which is very low on these satellites and is reserved for critical duties. There are many advantages of spy balloons over spy satellites or aircrafts:

1. They can fly at high altitudes, beyond of range of many air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles.
2. Airships can hover for long durations, making them ideal for watching an enemy's naval drills.
3. Finally, radar-absorbent material may help airships hide.
4. Airships help India monitor its unstable borders. Airships can identify traffickers and rescue fishing vessels around India's borders and littorals. Airships may follow ships at sea, notably in peacetime and non-wartime situations.

Other Dual-use surveillance technologies: Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles (UUVs)

Indonesian fisherman caught at least two Chinese Sea Wing UUVs in 2019 and 2020.

In 2019, one such survey ship entered India's EEZ near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands before being instructed to leave.

China's dual-use UUVs aren't alone in maritime surveillance. The PLA navy captured an American UUV near the Philippines in 2016, which was released later.

Four additional Sandhayak-class survey ships will join the Indian navy's six. Though specifics are unclear, these ships can launch remotely-operated and autonomous UUVs.

What should India do?

India will face new espionage technologies. States and non-state actors may employ low-cost commercial drones as aerial espionage.

India must develop cost-effective ways to shoot down inexpensive drones without using expensive air-to-air missiles, as well as specialised jammers.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

China conducted rendezvous and proximity operations (RPO) satellites that approached another orbiting ship. RPOs can repair, refuel, or sabotage other vessels, but they can also absorb communications.

India must work with the private sector and other like-minded nations to improve its space situational awareness to deal with RPOs.

36. Women-centric development – India Inc must help enhance the role of women in nation building

Source: The post is based on the article “**India Inc must help enhance the role of women in nation building**” published in **Live Mint** on **7th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Inclusive growth and issues arising from it..

Relevance: About women-centric development.

News: A paradigm shift is observed in reorienting India’s direction of economic growth, especially in curating women-centric career opportunities.

What is India’s progress in women-centric development?

From freedom fighters and political heroes to business successes, women leaders have exemplified ‘Naari Shakti’. Such as, **a)** The literacy rate of women has been rising steadily since independence, **b)** India is also bridging the gender literacy gap, **c)** India is pursuing an idea of ‘women-led development, and **d)** From space, aviation, science, sports, business, philanthropy and education to any other sphere, India have examples that do every citizen proud and serve as role models.

However, all this needs to go alongside steadily rising female labour participation.

Why women-centric development is essential?

a) India’s \$5 trillion economy aim can’t be realized without women’s contribution to GDP, **b)** By offering equal opportunity to women, the country could add an estimated \$770 billion to its GDP by 2025 and raise its household per capita income higher than it would otherwise be, and **c)** women’s empowerment will have a ripple effect in the society.

What are the challenges to women-centric development?

Lack of upskilling, a sense of complacency and missing chances for networking while meeting family and social responsibilities have been identified as drawbacks for women in their career progression.

What should be done to improve women-centric development?

-Leaders must design **gender-neutral leadership roles** to foster a cohesive ecosystem and enable women to rise. This is because a gender balance in managerial ranks is globally considered a sign of economic progress.

– An **overhaul of educational and parental inculcation** and **rejection of gender prejudice** are critical elements for a cross-sectional transformation to maximize Naari Shakti.

37. India must reduce its public debt ratio to build economic resilience

Source– The post is based on the article “**India must reduce its public debt ratio to build economic resilience**” published in the **mint** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government budgeting

Relevance– Issues related to public debt and government borrowing

News– The new budget has a credible plan to reduce the fiscal deficit as a proportion of India GDP.

What are the implications of high public debt ratio for macroeconomic policy over the medium term?

Interest cost of servicing this public debt reduces the capacity of the government to **spend on essential things** like infrastructure, welfare and defence.

It **reduces the capacity** of the government in responding to future shocks.

RBI ability to conduct **independent monetary policy** to control inflation is impacted.

How can public debt be managed?

Any strategy to reduce public debt needs to be built on **three pillars**–

There must be **acceleration in nominal GDP growth**.

Acceleration in nominal GDP growth should be seen in context of the **cost of government borrowings**.

The focus of fiscal policy must be to reduce not only the **headline deficit but also the primary deficit**.

The experience of previous decades provides us with useful context. **Public debt** came down by 17% between 2002 and 2011. This period can be broken down into two.

The first part of success was because of the **high growth rate**. It led to a **sharp fall in primary deficit**. In the second part, **nominal GDP grew at a fast pace** despite the global financial crisis. This was possible by **high inflation**.

What is the future scenario of public debt for the Indian economy?

Trajectory of public debt will depend on growth in economic output, inflation, interest rate and fiscal policy.

Nominal GDP in coming years is likely to be in **very low double digits**, unless there is **structural shift in potential growth and inflation**. The gap between nominal GDP and inflation will be low.

So, the **automatic drivers** bringing down public debt will not work. Government will have to use fiscal policy to **bring down the primary deficit**.

38. U.S. shot down a Chinese 'spy' balloon

Source: This post is created based on the article “U.S. shot down a Chinese ‘spy’ balloon”, published in The Hindu on 8th Feb 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology – Defence Technologies

Read more- [Advantages of Spy balloons over spy satellites](#)

On Jan 28, defence and military officials confirmed that a Chinese reconnaissance balloon has entered the US air defence zone.

Soon the balloon was shot down by a short-range AIM-9X Sidewinder missile of US.

What are spy balloons?

Spy balloons are high-altitude surveillance tools. They usually operate at 80,000-1,20,000 feet to gather intelligence. This height is well above the altitude of commercial aircraft.

These spy balloons are equipped with cameras and imaging devices.

Unlike satellites, balloons are economically viable. Due to their proximity to the Earth's surface, they can widely scan an area from close quarters and capture clearer, high-resolution images of the target.

39. [Boosting pharma research](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “Boosting pharma research”, published in Business Standard on 8th Feb 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Industries and industrial policies

News: Government is going to introduce research-linked incentive (RLI) scheme for pharmaceutical sector, just like PLI scheme for other sectors.

Not much is clear about the scheme, but specific areas within the pharma sector — including antibiotics and biosimilars, could be the target areas.

What are the needs of boost to pharmaceutical sector?

Research and development (R&D) spending in the sector is too low.

In fact, multinational pharma companies operating in India are spending higher part of their domestic revenue on R & D than by Indian companies.

R & D is still not considered profitable by companies. Because they have not yet seen visible returns on any successful innovation in India.

What are things to be considered before launching the scheme?

If RLIs are linked to individual projects, then there will be a dilemma whether higher R&D will be achieved over time without unsustainable expenditure by the government.

A separate vertical for incentives for micro, small, and medium enterprises to invest in R&D cannot replace the need for access to basic science and cheap financing and human capital that allows such start-ups to flourish.

It would be difficult to identify sub-sectors within the pharma business that would be the most productive recipients of RLI.

40. [Private sector has not responded to government initiatives so far](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Private sector has not responded to government initiatives so far**” published in **The Indian Express** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Changing structure of economy

News– Despite record profits of the larger firms and the increase in capital spending by the public sector, a broad-based recovery in private sector investments and consumption has not materialised.

What are the broad points that show the changing structure of the Indian economy?

Profits of larger firms– Larger firms have shown the trend of the **rising share of capital and the falling share of labour** in national income. A few big firms now account for a higher portion of profits.

In 2019-20, 433 firms had reported profits **in excess of Rs 500 crore**. In 2020-21, the first year of the pandemic, this rose to 517.

There were 1,558 companies whose profits ranged **between Rs 100-500 crore**. Together these firms accounted for 77.41% of all profits. These firms represent just 0.2% of the entire corporate sector.

Corporate tax regime– For companies having profit above 500 crores, the **effective tax rate** is around 19.14%. It is much lower than that for the smaller-sized companies.

For firms with profits in the **range of 0-1 crore and 1-10 crore**, the tax rate was 24.82% and 23.13% respectively.

These **tax rate differentials** imply that the larger firms have either availed of the higher **deductions or incentives under the old tax regime** or have shifted to the **new regime of lower taxes**.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

So far, 20% of all firms have opted for the **exemption-less regime**. These firms account for a little more than 60% of total income.

This suggests that the **larger, more profitable firms** are opting to shift. There are also indications that this regime has perhaps led to a reduction in tax disputes.

However, only 3,508 companies had opted for the 15% tax regime during this period. This suggests that lower tax rates were perhaps **not strong enough incentive for fresh private sector investments** in the manufacturing sector.

New Income tax structure– The **new personal income tax regime** has not seen much traction. Migration to the new regime will depend on the **extent of individuals taking advantage of the existing exemptions**. The revenue foregone by the government on these items are still high. Calculations suggest that if a salaried taxpayer is availing of exemptions for investments and medical insurance, then the switching point will perhaps be a little less than Rs 9 lakh. However, the more the exemptions are availed, higher will be the income threshold at which the individual will want to switch to the new tax framework.

Increased public investment– The larger public sector now accounts for a **much bigger share of overall investment** in the economy than before.

At the end of 2022-23, **capital expenditure by the public sector** was around a quarter of all investments in the economy. Their share is up by roughly 5% since 2014-15.

In the coming year, if state governments match the central government's **increase in capex**, then the **share of the public sector in total investments** in the economy may be closer to 30%.

41. Make In IndIA – As Google comes up with a ChatGPT rival & AI becomes ubiquitous, here's what GoI must do

Source: The post is based on the article “**Make In IndIA – As Google comes up with a ChatGPT rival & AI becomes ubiquitous, here's what GoI must do**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Awareness in the fields of IT.

Relevance: About AI research.

News: Recently, Google said that a new artificial intelligence (AI) service named Bard is being tested ahead of a public launch. Its public launch will make it the second generative AI, after ChatGPT.

What is AI research?

AI doesn't have a precise definition. It's best described as a constellation of technologies. The idea arises from English mathematician Alan Turing's work in 1950 where he suggested a machine could be programmed to learn from experience like children do. AI rests on three pillars: data, algorithms and computing power.

What is ChatGPT?

Must read: [What is OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot, why it has become a viral sensation](#)

What is the potential of Generative AI?

Read more: [The potential of generative AI: creating media with simple text prompts](#)

How global nations are promoting AI research?

a) A lot of US government support to domestic AI development is routed through its defence industry, b) China also allocated state resources behind its attempt to dominate the AI market.

How Indian government is promoting AI research in its recent budget?

Acknowledging AI's importance, the budget announced that three centres of excellence in AI will be set up in top educational institutions, with the private sector contributing to the effort.

Read more: [AI chatbot, my future colleague](#)

What should be done to improve AI research in India?

Government needs to prioritise **Large-scale funding** and the **creation of research ecosystems** that draw in global Indian talent in AI.

AI is already in extensive use at the commercial level. Indian firms at present have **access to domestic talent** now they should also have **access to data** also. Indian firms need a **sound regulatory framework** that allows access to a lot more anonymised data.

Government's expert committee suggested **open access to non-personal data**. For that, India's should **establish a legal framework** to both safeguard privacy and provide open access to anonymised data for Indian startups.

Overall, with the AI's technological frontier, India can have a chance of leapfrogging few traditional stages of growth.

42. [Signs of a weakening public sector](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Signs of a weakening public sector**" published in the **Business Standard** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting.

Relevance: About fiscal relations between the Centre and states and PSUs.

News: The Budget reveals the nature of the Centre's financial engagement with public sector undertakings (PSU).

About Centre's fiscal relations with states

The Centre's fiscal relations with states are principally governed by the recommendations of the Finance Commission. Accordingly, states have a 41% share in the total taxes (Only in net shareable tax proceeds but not in cesses and surcharges) collected by the Union government.

In the last few years, the share of collections from various cesses and surcharges has gone up steadily. From about 5% of the Centre's gross tax collections in 2017-18 to about 13% in the revised estimate of the Budget this year. Hence, the State's share in the Centre's gross tax collections has declined to 30-33%.

How the budget responded to Cess and Surcharges?

Cesses and surcharges in 2023-24 are expected to see one of the lowest increases in recent years. This is because, **a)** The share of cesses and surcharges in the gross domestic product (GDP) is declining, for the first time in the last three years, to 1.35%, **b)** The super-rich tax has come down from 42.7% to 39% because the surcharge on it has been slashed from 37% to 25%.

Why the states are happy with the recent budget?

1) The revenue hit from cess and surcharge reduction will be borne entirely by the Centre and, therefore, would not affect the amount of tax transfer to the states, **2)** States will witness an increased allocation of capital expenditure advances by 30%, **3)** The states get assistance from the Centre by way of grants and loans. This is not reduced in the recent budget.

Why the PSUs are happy with the recent budget?

The budget for 2023-24 has been generous with its capital expenditure. A large chunk of its capital outlay would be routed through capital support to PSUs. For instance, in 2022-23, PSUs accounted for over half of the government's capital expenditure, up from a share of 42% in 2021-22.

What are the challenges faced by PSUs recently?

a) There is a decline in the share of the PSUs' own contribution to their total capital outlay on projects. Hence, PSUs are increasingly becoming more dependent on the Centre to meet their

capital expenditure requirements. For instance, the gradual weakening of the PSUs is clearly visible from the state of the Indian Railways.

In 2023-24, Railways would be helped by Rs 2.4 trillion of capital support from the Centre. But its own contribution to its capital projects will decline to 18%.

b) There is also a lack of accountability in ensuring a decent return on such investment. Overall, the government must expedite its plan for asset sale and privatisation.

43. [A Nordic-India connect to power a green transition](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A Nordic-India connect to power a green transition**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Bilateral, Regional groupings and agreement affecting India interests

Relevance– Relations between India and Nordic countries

News– Trade Ministers of Norway and Finland are currently visiting India together.

What is the importance of the Nordic region?

Over the last decades, Nordic countries have been at the forefront of developing **new green technologies and solutions** such as hydrogen, offshore wind, and carbon capture and storage. The Nordics have succeeded in building **stable, secure, welfare based societies** to a large extent.

The Nordic region has ambitions to become the **most sustainable and integrated region** in the world by 2030.

What is the current status of relations between India and Nordic countries?

The **Nordic -India Summit** was held in Copenhagen in May 2022. The five Nordic leaders and Indian Prime Minister agreed to intensify cooperation on **digitalisation, renewable energy, maritime industries, and the circular economy**.

PM of India expressed an interest in joint Nordic solutions that can support **India's green transition**.

The **Nordic business community** in India is also growing. There are now 240 Norwegian and Finnish companies in India.

India and Finland– The past year has seen a significant rise in **trade and investments** between Finland and India.

India has grown to become a **priority country for Finland**. Finland has recently opened a new Consulate General in Mumbai.

Several Indian companies are looking towards Finland for its expertise in areas of **technology and innovation, sustainability, digitalisation, carbon neutrality** and more.

An increasing number of Indian students, researchers, and experts have been moving to Finland as well. Finnish companies such as Nokia and Fortum have some of their **most significant investments** in India.

India and Norway– Trade between Norway and India has doubled in the last three years. The **Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund** is likely to become one of India's largest single foreign investors with around \$17.6 Billion investment.

The Norwegian government has also recently established a **new Climate Investment Fund** for investments in renewables abroad, and India has been defined as a focus country. Almost ₹1,500 crore have been invested so far in India through the climate investment fund.

What is the scope for future collaborations between India and Nordic countries?

Both Norway and Finland have ongoing **free trade agreement and investments negotiations** with India. Finland, is a part of the EU- India FTA negotiations, and Norway is negotiating through the European Free Trade Association.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

Finalising the **free trade and investments agreements** should be a priority.

There is a great deal of complementarities in our trade relations. In addition, **trade in services** is an area of significant potential, especially with **tourism, education, IT, energy, maritime and financial services**.

Together, the Nordics and India can **power the green transition** the world needs.

44. The role of labour unions in emerging sectors

Source– The post is based on the article “**The role of labour unions in emerging sectors**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and employment

Relevance– Labour rights

News–There have been many reports of layoffs in the last few months, especially in emerging sectors.

In 2022, startups including Byju’s announced lay-offs. At the global level, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, Microsoft, Twitter and Apple have laid off employees.

What is the current status of trade unionism in the emerging sector?

There are **Unionisation attempts** in these giant companies. Amazon workers at the warehouse at Staten Island called JFK8 succeeded in forming the Amazon Labour Union.

On the other hand, employees at the warehouse near Albany voted overwhelmingly against unionisation in October 2022 as many of them were sceptical of the bargaining power of a union against a giant like Amazon.

In India, the **Information Technology Employees Senate**, which works for the welfare rights of IT professionals, complained to the Union Labour Minister about retrenchment by Amazon.

Why forming unions in modern and emerging sectors is much more difficult as compared to conventional industries?

IT- Services employees felt no need for trade unions as unions are typically associated with **manual labour**. IT employees are associated with “**elitism**” and “**professionalism**”.

They have **competitive compensation pay packages, supposedly good conditions of work and a mechanism to address grievances**. So, they stay on and are loyal to the company and the industry.

They switch to other organisations as they have the **required skill sets**. They do not **collectively bargain or resort to legal action** as middle class employees who go to court would be stigmatised.

Unions in the IT sector have to deal with both **Indian and Western giants**. It is a huge task.

The state obviously needs MNCs to stay on in India.

Multi-national corporations don’t take labour departments seriously. They ignore conciliation meetings more often than trade unions.

What are other issues faced by labour Unionism in India?

Trade unions are fighting on multiple fronts. They are struggling for **historical labour rights, social security for the informal workers** and fighting against **adversities created during and after COVID-19**.

Industrial accidents are frequent. Many garment and electronics industries violate labour rights.

Unions have sometimes succeeded in securing marginal rights. But there is only so much that they can do.

45. Counting the Female Labour Force Participation Rate accurately

Source– The post is based on the article “**Counting the Female Labour Force Participation Rate accurately**” published in **The Indian Express** on 8th February 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and employment

Relevance– Measurement of statistics related to employment

News– Economic Survey tries to address a longstanding policy problem by developing a better method to count women’s participation in the labour force

What is PLFS?

It is defined as the **percentage of persons in the labour force** in the population. LFPR is the percentage of the population that is employed, or is looking for work, but is unemployed.

What is the importance of women participation in the workforce?

As per a **McKinsey report**, if India achieved gender equality, it would add 700 billion US dollars to GDP in 2025. **Annual GDP growth** will increase by 1.4%. There are other such studies with other such numbers.

What are the issues with calculation of PLFS by official estimates?

In any informal economy, arriving at numbers like LFPR is difficult. An **enterprise survey** won’t work. Despite **increasing formalisation**, **self-employment** is large.

Even within the formal sector, **informal contracts** are the norm. Roughly 50% of employment is **self-employment**. More than 20% is **wage employment** with a regular contract and the rest is casual labour.

Hence, employment numbers have to be generated through household surveys, not enterprise ones.

Economic survey observations– Economic Survey 2022-23 highlights an important measurement issue. The **common narrative of Indian women’s low LFPR** misses the reality of working females **integral to the economy of the household and the country**.

Measurement of employment through the **survey design and content** can make a significant difference to final LFPR estimates. This matters more for measuring female LFPR than male LFPR.

Three main measurement issues have been highlighted: **Overly broad categories**, reliance on a single question to categorise labour force status, and the **narrow approach** of limiting productive work to labour force participation.

Use of overly broad categories that clubs productive work like collection of firewood, poultry farming with domestic duties can shift a significant proportion of women in the labour force into the **out-of-labour-force category**.

For example, unless the production of primary goods is identified as the main activity by the respondent, the PLFS would categorise women who do both domestic activities and primary goods production as out-of-the-labour-force.

Using the **improved methodology**, the Survey recomputes female LFPR with a better definition. Female LFPR is counted **46.2% for FY21** for ages 15 years and above. It is much higher than the 32.5% estimated by the conventional definition.

ILO estimates– A similar attempt was made in an International Labour Organisation research paper published in 2014. It arrived at a female **LFPR of 56.4%** in India for 2012, against the lower official estimate of 31.2% for 2012.

46. [Our unique EV transition is a leadership opportunity](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Our unique EV transition is a leadership opportunity” published in the **Live Mint** on **9th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Relevance: About electric 2Ws and 3Ws transition.

News: The 2023-24 budget gave the EV industry a boost by announcing the removal of customs duties on capital goods used for manufacturing lithium cells used in Electric vehicles.

A greater **focus on passenger three-wheelers and commercial two-wheelers** can accelerate India’s green push by improving livelihoods while reducing environmental and transport costs.

What are the challenges faced by EVs?

Electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers (including e-rickshaws) accounted for 92% of EVs registered in the country in 2022. Despite clear economic gains and the availability of EV models, e-2Wheelers(e-2Ws) and e-3Wheelers(e-3Ws) are still not being adopted at the desired pace.

Only 4.5% of three-wheelers registered last year were electric. Similarly, e-2Ws made up just 3.9% of total two-wheelers sales last year.

What are the advantages of the adoption of electric 2Ws and 3Ws?

Analysis by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) shows the total cost of owning an electric three-wheeler (e-3W) is 13-46% lower than that of owning similar vehicles using petrol, diesel and compressed natural gas. When drivers switch to electric, a 30% increase in daily savings is enough to pay back an e-3W loan.

What are the challenges faced in the adoption of electric 2Ws and 3Ws transition?

The slow uptake can be attributed to low awareness, lack of trust in EV performance, high finance cost, poor visibility and poor access to charging infrastructure.

What should be done to promote the electric 2Ws and 3Ws transition?

Setting up EV credit guarantee trust funds to de-risk financiers: Most 2W delivery riders and 3W drivers rely on high-interest loans from informal markets. MSMEs, which face a similar challenge, have benefited from credit guarantee funds. Hence, it should be extended to commercial EV segment as well.

Make chargers easily accessible: Auto-rickshaws spend their operational and non-operational idle times at specific parking locations with high footfall. Similarly, 2W delivery riders spend their idle time near pick-up hubs and restaurants. Hence, the charging infrastructure should be strategically developed for them.

Incentivize battery swapping ecosystems: Time loss is crucial for commercial EVs. So, India should promote interoperability among heterogeneous fleets within the same battery-swapping ecosystems.

Allocate higher funds to improve awareness: Swachh Bharat Mission-like awareness is required to improve awareness of FAME scheme.

India should double its electric 2Ws and 3Ws transition to maximize its benefits for the environment, people’s livelihoods and the Indian economy. With this, India has an opportunity to lead the efforts of other Asian emerging economies to chart their inclusive energy-transition strategies.

47. [All governments are crony capitalists](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**All governments are crony capitalists**” published in the **Business Standard** on **9th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: About business-political nexus.

News: Political connections for business purposes often happen due to complex rules and regulations and the evasive nature of rules in India. The recent [Hindenburg report on the Adani group](#) again created a debate on the business-political nexus.

Why there is a debate on the business-political nexus at present?

This is because the **a)** Adani group has a dominant presence in areas in which government policy plays a major role — ports, airports, electricity, green energy — and the principal competition mostly comes from the public sector, **b)** CAG report also raised questions about “undue benefits” that the Gujarat government gave to Adani Ports by waiving waterfront and other charges, **c)** Involvement of government-owned Public Sector Banks participation and **d)** Both the NITI Aayog and the finance ministry raised questions citing financial risk and performance issues in the Adani group’s airport projects.

What are a few examples highlighting the business-political nexus?

The telecom sector spectrum allocation has highlighted the business-political nexus. The Supreme Court’s judgement cancelled all those allocated licences.

The sand mafias, who are destroying the environment, would never have flourished without local political backing.

The construction business, which has long been India’s largest and fastest growing employer, is a good example of cronyism.

To prevent the business-political nexus some degree of moderation is required to ensure the government’s incorruptibility.

48. [Quake Up Call – Turkiye, Syria impact magnified by poor construction. India must ensure building codes are followed](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Quake Up Call – Turkiye, Syria impact magnified by poor construction. India must ensure building codes are followed**” published in **The Times of India** on **9th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster Management.

Relevance: About earthquake-resistant construction.

News: Recently, an earthquake of magnitude 7.8 struck south-central Turkey and Northwest Syria. **Poor construction and rampant violation of building code** is the primary reason for widespread damages in Turkey and Syria.

Around 59% of India is prone to earthquakes of different magnitudes – 11% in the very high-risk Zone V to 30% in Zone III. Hence, earthquake-resistant construction is essential in India to avoid such damage.

About the earthquake in Turkey

Read more: [How are earthquakes measured and how massive is the Turkey one?](#)

About the status of earthquake-resistant construction in India

India doesn’t have norms for earthquake-resistant construction. As they require 3-4% extra of the total construction cost for residential buildings and 2-3% extra for offices.

Even though National Building Code (NBC) 2016 has a specific section on earthquake-resistant design and construction. But there’s no law asking for compliance.

For instance, In Delhi an estimated 90% of buildings are at risk of collapsing in case of a strong earthquake.

What should be done to ensure earthquake-resistant construction?

Earthquakes can't be predicted, but measures to minimise loss of lives must be prioritised. This can be done by **a) There needs to be greater public awareness about NBC guidelines** to boost voluntary compliance, **b) Municipalities should be encouraged to adopt NBC guidelines in their building bye-laws**, making them mandatory.

49. [Global green growth conundrum](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Global green growth conundrum**” published in the **Business Standard** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance– Green transition of economy across the globe

News– Green growth is the overarching theme across the world. Every country is wooing investment in manufacturing. There is a “buy local” wave depending on the “make at home” initiative.

What are initiatives taken by countries across the globe for domestic manufacturing of components needed for green transition?

The US climate law, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) passed last year offers **incentives for local manufacturing** of batteries and electric vehicles and also gives a boost to **technologies like carbon capture**.

As per **BloombergNEF estimates**, about \$35 billion have been committed to the **North American electric vehicle supply chain** since the new law was passed. Over half of this is for battery manufacturing.

India's self-reliance initiatives cover 14 sectors under the **production-linked incentive scheme** for **domestic manufacturing** including batteries and solar panels.

The **European Union** is planning its own set of incentives to boost local manufacturing and ensure that competitive offers by other countries do not affect investments and jobs. It has unveiled the “**Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age**”.

Canada plans to bring its **own incentives** in line with those of the US. **Australia, Brazil and Chile** are likely to explore similar options.

China has a dominant presence in the **battery** as well as the **solar supply chain**. It is considering proposals to restrict export of certain equipment for making solar ingots and wafers.

What shows the focus of the Indian government on green growth?

Green growth is the overarching theme across the world.

It was a core part of the Indian government's Budget for 2023-2024. There were as many as **25 mentions of “green”** in the Budget speech.

Budget announced a **Customs duty exemption** for import of capital goods and machinery required for manufacture of lithium-ion cells for batteries used in electric vehicles.

Rs 35,000 crore were allocated for **priority capital investments towards energy transition and net zero objectives, and energy security**.

What are examples of countries levying carbon border tax?

The European Union has recently agreed upon a carbon **border adjustment mechanism**. It would tax imports into the EU according to the amount of **carbon emitted** in their production.

Canada plans to introduce a similar levy, and the US is exploring its options.

50. [India's green hydrogen challenge](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's green hydrogen challenge**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

Relevance– Renewable sources of energy

News– On India's 75th Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the National Hydrogen Mission to make the country a production and export hub of green hydrogen.

What are some facts about the National Hydrogen Mission?

It has an initial outlay of Rs **19,744 crore over the next five years**. The target is **5 million metric tonnes production per annum** with an associated renewable energy capacity addition of about 125 GW by 2030.

It will lead to savings of **\$12.5 billion from fuel imports, averting 50 MMTs of annual emissions of Carbon dioxide, fresh investments of \$100 billion, and 6,00,000 green jobs**.

What are challenges in production and use of green hydrogen?

Electrolyser challenge: According to **IEA**, as of 2021 the **global manufacturing capacity** of electrolyzers stands at 8 GW/year.

If India were to achieve its 2030 target, it would need **60-100 GW of electrolyser capacity**. It is almost 12 times the **current global production capacity**.

India currently has launched projects to **manufacture electrolyzers**, but the actual numbers as of today are negligible.

Access to **critical minerals** such as nickel, platinum group metals and **rare earth metals** could hinder scaling up electrolyser manufacturing capability in India.

These resources are **concentrated in countries** such as China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Australia, Indonesia, South Africa, Chile and Peru. India also has **limited processing capabilities** in these minerals.

Energy source challenge: As per current estimates a completely **efficient electrolysis system** would require 39 kWh of electricity to produce 1 kg of hydrogen. Green hydrogen requires renewable energy as a source of electricity.

India currently estimates a capacity of **125 GW of renewable energy** to meet its green hydrogen 2030 targets. So far India has only achieved 119 GW of the 175 GW targeted capacity using solar, wind, bio-power and small hydro.

In addition to the generation capacity, the **transmission capacity for cross-border exchange** of power between states is a critical requirement.

End use challenge: Currently, most of the demand for hydrogen comes from the **chemical industry to produce ammonia** for fertilisers, **refining for hydrocracking and the desulphurisation of fuels**.

It can be a source of **heat for industries** such as steel, cement and aluminium production. It can be **used as fuel** for heavy duty vehicles, aviation and shipping.

The **conversion efficiency** from one form of energy carrier to another in the end use application will determine the scale of **green hydrogen's applicability**.

Hydrogen is a **highly combustible and volatile element**. Its potency in other forms such as ammonia or methanol is only relatively reduced.

It is critical to **establish safety standards for storage and transportation**. It will add to the cost of hydrogen as a fuel.

Endogenous resources challenge: In the case of India, approximately **50 billion litres of demineralised water supply** will be required for production of green hydrogen.

Several parts of India are already **severely water-stressed**. So, solutions need to be found to cater to this additional water demand.

Desalination has been suggested. But, this will increase the **physical footprint of the required infrastructure**. It will lead to **more land use, impact biodiversity and create limitations in the location of electrolyzers**.

What is the way forward to overcome these challenges?

India needs to set up large scale manufacturing for electrolyzers, **building expertise and securing geo-political partnerships** for procurement of critical minerals. There is a need for improving the **overall technical and economic viability** of electrolyzers.

Proposed green hydrogen hubs will be required to **strike a fine balance** between availability of renewable energy and being close to hydrogen demand centres for economic feasibility.

India needs to add close to **100 GW of overall renewable energy capacity per year** over the next seven years and. **Dispatch corridors and mechanisms** should be made available..

51. [India must avoid growing into a dystopia](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India must avoid growing into a dystopia**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– The focus of economic growth has been on income generation. The development of masses is often neglected.

News– The focus of economic growth has been on income generation. The development of masses, rising inequalities and employment generation is neglected.

What is the economic scenario of India?

Private investment plans during the first nine months of this year to be over 50% greater than what they were a year ago.

India it seems is on a roll as far as economic growth is concerned.

India has overtaken the United Kingdom to become the **world's fifth largest economy**.

The London Based consultancy **Centre for Economics And Business Research (CEBR)** predicted that by 2035, India's economy would **reach \$10 trillion** and become the **world's third largest by 2037**.

Why is the West interested in the growth of the Indian economy?

India is a democracy in the east and also the largest one in terms of population. All the countries in the **West are democracies**. So, they see a possible **alliance of interests**.

India's growing economic size has made it attractive in a way that it was not before. Its fast growth is an **investment opportunity** for the surplus savings of the West. Investing money in India is likely to yield the **highest returns globally**.

What is the status of employment in India?

Government data show that in mid- 2022, unemployment among urban males was much higher than it was a decade ago.

Data from the **Centre For Monitoring Indian Economy** show that the number of people employed in December 2022 was less than it was in 2016.

Clearly, the **growth of the national economy** has not generated an equal growth in employment.

What are the impacts of growth on Environment?

Uncontrolled growth will almost certainly result in **ecological insecurity**.

The construction of new **elevated national highways** destroys agricultural land and jeopardising livelihoods.

Plans for infrastructure aimed at religious tourism in Uttarakhand and Kerala have caused **landslides and flooding**. It led to suffering for their people.

What can be done to improve employment opportunities for the masses?

Employment opportunities for the mass population will arise only when there is **demand for goods in the production** of which they can participate.

Growth of the IT sector or of exportable manufactures will not be of much use for them. They possess low education and skills.

Increased demand for **goods of mass consumption** alone will lead to an expansion in the demand for these workers.

For an expansion of this demand, **low inflation** is essential. Only then will low-income households have enough to demand more manufactured goods.

A concerted policy focus can create the conditions for employment generation in India. Welfarism, defined by the free or subsidised distribution of private goods, is no substitute.

What is the way forward for economic policy?

India needs growth as it has a **backlog of poverty**. But growth alone is not enough for improving the lives of the poorest. It is ecologically harmful.

Size is valuable only when it **enhances the well being** of the population.

52. Unintended consequences – Subsidy on EVs must be revisited

Source: The post is based on the article “**Unintended consequences – Subsidy on EVs must be revisited**” published in the **Business Standard** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Relevance: About Subsidy on EVs.

News: Government subsidy provided for electric vehicles (EVs) under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme might have some unintended consequences.

Why government is providing Subsidy on EVs?

The government is subsidising EVs **a)** To help consumers make the transition of adoption of EVs, **b)** EVs will help reduce vehicular pollution in cities, **c)** The EVs will assist the government in containing the import of fuel, **d)** To improve external financial balance.

Read more: [Our unique EV transition is a leadership opportunity](#)

How do the Subsidy on EVs cause unintended consequences?

Market participants aim to maximise returns, But this profit maximisation is not always in line with the spirit of the rules designed by the state. This might hold true for EVs. Hence, EV subsidies cause unintended consequences. Such as,

a) Some electric two-wheeler manufacturers have been violating rules at different levels, **b)** Some firms were not following the localisation norms and depend on imports, presumably to contain costs, **c)** EV makers are also being probed for bypassing the price cap set by the government.

All this partly defeats the purpose of the EV subsidies, because it would not help develop an indigenous value chain to enable sustainable growth. Hence, the government has so far barred 17 manufacturers from the pool of 64 registered under the scheme.

How India can revamp the Subsidy on EVs that are causing unintended consequences?

At the micro level, the scheme will need to be redesigned. Such as **a)** Instead of capping the price, the government can give subsidies directly to the consumer, like direct benefit transfer, lower interest rates on loans for EVs, etc, **b)** The localisation condition can be monitored with better use of technology.

53. [Girl in Gurgaon: Cases of abuse of domestic workers raise questions about informal employment sector](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Girl in Gurgaon: Cases of abuse of domestic workers raise questions about informal employment sector**” published in the **Live Mint** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Employment.

Relevance: Concerns associated with domestic work.

News: Recently, a Gurgaon-based couple was booked for allegedly assaulting and torturing a minor girl who worked for them as a domestic help. An FIR has been registered under sections of the **Indian Penal Code**, the [Juvenile Justice Act](#) and the [Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act](#).

About Domestic work in India

Domestic work in India serves as a major and growing employment avenue, especially for uneducated and unskilled workers from rural areas as well as the urban poor.

According to the government’s [e-Shram portal](#), a national database of unorganised workers, almost 10% of the workers registered are engaged as domestic and household workers.

Over the years, there has been a growth in the number of private agencies that act as a conduit between the demand and supply ends of the market. Employment in this category tends to be dominated by women, with most of them being migrants.

As urbanisation increases, the nuclearisation of families rises, and the pressures on families of old-age care increase the demand for domestic care work is only likely to escalate.

What is the bigger concern associated with domestic work?

The recent issue highlights **a)** the nature and form of informal employment relationships in India and **b)** the unequal power equations between the employers and employees that underlie them.

The other challenges faced by domestic workers include **a)** the work often involves long hours, **b)** the wages in these occupations in urban areas, especially in the major metropolitan centres, may be higher than in rural areas, **c)** the implementation of minimum wage rules remains an unaddressed issue across the country, **d)** these workers have little bargaining power, **e)** they have little access to social protection and are at times subject to harassment and abuse and **f)** low state capacity led to implementation issues on the ground.

Though the involvement of private agencies indicates some sort of push towards the formalisation of domestic workers. Their functioning remains mostly informal in nature. Most of them fail to provide any form of support, financial or otherwise, to these girls and women.

What should be done to address the concerns associated with domestic work?

There is a need to **address the power imbalance and provide greater protection** for domestic workers. The government should also **retain a degree of flexibility in work structures**.

The government should also ensure **detailed documentation and greater transparency in work contracts**, along with **stricter enforcement of rules and regulations**.

54. [India’s law and order matrix needs a reboot](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India’s law and order matrix needs a reboot**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance– Reform in police force

News– The annual All India Conference of Directors General/Inspectors General of Police which was held recently.

What are issues related to the conference of DGPs?

There is a **proliferation of subjects** up for discussion in recent conferences, and the **presence of increasing numbers of delegates** to cover the various subjects. It leaves little scope for any in-depth discussion.

Today's security threats have an **all-embracing character**. There is a need for in-depth discussions on **futuristic themes in policing**, such as cyber-crime, the dark web, and unchecked social media.

These are in addition to subjects such as left-wing extremism, counter-terrorism, drug tracking and border issues.

Lack of adequate time to discuss these matters in detail undermine the quality of the debates and possible outcomes.

Hence, decision making in these circumstances needs **fundamental changes**. There is a need for **more purposeful discussion** at higher levels.

What are the issues faced by police forces in modern times?

Law and order management today has not been given sufficient attention. This subject may appear redundant in a world dominated by technology.

It demands a **combination of newer skills, in both technology and crowd management**. These are not available among security agencies.

The attention of most security forces in the country has essentially been devoted to ongoing threats such as terrorism.

A **heavy-handed approach** to deal with crowds creates more problems. This only leads to division between law enforcement agencies and the public.

Police forces have not spent enough attention to **selection of personnel** to security agencies. **'Open-Source intelligence'** is often neglected by security agencies. The proper utilisation of it can become the critical factor in managing many law and order situations today.

There is a presence of **multiple security agencies**, including intelligence and investigative agencies. They seldom act with a common purpose.

Their **techniques and methodologies tend** to be different. It leads to **contradictions in approach**. They often **hinder proper analysis and investigation**.

What is the way forward for reform in the police force?

There is a need to bring about changes in intelligence techniques, investigative methodologies, and improving the ground situation.

Decision making in changed circumstances of the 21st century needs to undergo fundamental changes. There is a need for more purposeful discussion at higher levels.

Annual conferences of DGPs/IGPs can be split into two separate conferences. **A higher-level conference of DGPs/IGPs** should discuss **policy related issues**. **A separate conference** should be held of intelligence and security specialists to discuss the **methodology, techniques and acquisition of new skills** for current and future problems.

In the 21st century, security problems will grow at an **exponential rate**. The emerging challenges would require **greater innovativeness and agility**.

A **new set of cognitive skills** will be needed to meet the challenges posed by **swift technological change and the rise of data war**.

Managing today's angry, and unruly mobs requires a **fresh set of skills and inherent abilities**, apart from technology.

Police and security agencies must be provided with the **right attributes**. They need to be **adequately trained**. This needs a **top-down approach** due to considerable competition of resources within the agencies for other items such as weaponry and technology.

The **selection of personnel** to security agencies, especially the police will require a total makeover.

The police forces must be capable of dealing with **modern criminals**. They often employ a **variety of tactics and skills**. Police and security forces must develop a **different mind-set**. Force cannot be the answer to every situation.

55. India's fiscal dilemma

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's fiscal dilemma**” published in **The Indian Express** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government budgeting

Relevance– Fiscal situation of economy

News– The recently announced budget provides a good opportunity to study the fiscal situation of the country.

What is the good news for the fiscal scenario of the country?

The **fiscal situation** has proved resilient to the successive shocks.

Tax collections as a percent of GDP are actually marginally higher than they were in 2018-19. On the spending side, the composition has improved. **Capital expenditure** has increased from 1.5% of GDP to a budgeted 3.5% of GDP.

Sizable amount of **off-budget expenditures** were brought back onto the budget.

The fiscal deficit is now on a **downward trajectory**. It is budgeted to fall to about 6% of GDP next year from a Covid peak of more than 9%.

What are the mixed developments related to the fiscal situation?

Personal income taxes have shown an encouraging rise. But, this is accompanied by increases in exemption limits. It means that taxation is now resting on a **narrower base of taxpayers**.

The GST's promise has not yet been realised. **The collection ratio** has remained essentially the same as it was five years ago. It is because **efficiency gains** have been offset by repeated reductions in rates.

Furthermore, **corporate tax revenues** have declined significantly, because tax rates have been reduced.

What are bad signals for the fiscal situation?

There has been a **notable increase in expenditures** over the past five years. The true increase in expenditure remains substantial, exceeding 1.5% of GDP.

The **structural fiscal deficit** is budgeted to 6% of GDP next fiscal due to high expenditure.

The large deficits since 2018-19 have necessitated **large amounts of borrowing**. It has led to an increase in **interest obligations**. They now absorb nearly half of the centre's tax revenues.

The second issue is **centralisation**. The states will receive just **31% of gross tax revenues** next fiscal, compared with 37% in 2018-19. This reflects the centre's **increasing use of cesses**, which are not shared with the states.

A **subtler form of centralisation** is taking place on the **expenditure side**. **Non-interest, non-subsidy current expenditure** is being compressed by 1% of GDP in 2022-23 and 0.5 % of GDP next year.

The centre is scaling back its transfers to states for various **centrally sponsored schemes**. Some of the reduction can be justified because it is aimed at forcing the states to improve their efficiency in their spending and managing their funds.

What are the limitations of centralisation for fiscal consolidation?

In an optimistic scenario, Centralisation can lead to improvement in **state government efficiency**. But, the centre will need to find other ways to reduce the deficit to its target of 4.5% of GDP.

Centralisation may not succeed in **improving efficiency**. In that case, states would either need to reduce the services provided to their people or increase their borrowing. The **overall fiscal position** might not improve at all.

56. India-U.S. space cooperation, from handshake to hug

Source– The post is based on the article “**India-U.S. space cooperation, from handshake to hug**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of space

Relevance– International cooperation in space for India

News– Recently, India and the United States have agreed to advance space collaboration in several areas under the ‘initiative on critical and emerging technology’ umbrella.

What shows convergence of interests for space collaboration between the US and India?

In November 2022, the USA started its **Artemis programme** by launching the **Orion spacecraft** towards the moon. India is set to embark on its first human spaceflight mission in 2024.

The two countries have also taken significant efforts in **advancing the private space sector**.

What are structural factors limiting US and India collaboration in space?

Mismatch in interests– The U.S. has committed to **returning to the moon**. They plan to stay there for the long term. Their ambitions are firmly set on the moon.

India’s scientific community focuses on building the **nation’s capability in and under earth orbits**. India’s top priority is to substantially **increase its satellite and launch capabilities in earth orbits** and catch up with other nations such as China.

Asymmetry in capabilities– The U.S. has the **highest number of registered satellites** in space. It also has a range of launch vehicles serving both commercial and national security needs. SpaceX managed to achieve a record 61 launches in 2022.

India has just over 60 satellites in orbit. It cannot undertake **double digit launches annually**. The Indian government also opened the space industry to the private sector only in 2020.

Disagreements on space governance– Even though countries have a mindset to collaborate, the **structural factors overpower diplomatic incentives** to pursue long term Cooperation.

What is the way forward for India and the US to collaborate in the space sector?

There is a need for **long term cooperation** to sustain the **engagement between academics, the private sector and state-led entities** in the two countries.

Sustained engagement could also take the form of **collaborating on highly specialised projects** such as the NASA--ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar Mission.

India and the U.S. must find **novel solutions** to cooperate in the new space age to achieve a **meaningful partnership**.

One form of cooperation is a **partnership between state and private entities**. India could send its astronauts to train at American private companies. This could help India reduce its dependence on Russia.

Another novel arrangement could be a consortium led by the government owned **New Space India Limited** which involves private companies in the U.S.

This setup could accelerate **India’s human spaceflight programme** and give the U.S. an opportunity to accommodate Indian interests in earth orbits.

57. [A question of quorum](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “A question of quorum” published in the **Business Standard** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Regulation of economic activities

News– Competition Commission of India has invoked the “**doctrine of necessity**” to clear six deals involving mergers & acquisitions and investment proposals.

What are the issues raised by this event?

It lacked the **requisite three-member quorum** after the Chairperson retired. The **Competition Act** provides that there should be at least three members to approve deals.

But, the CCI obtained a green signal for a two-member quorum from the law ministry to the corporate affairs ministry.

What is the legality of action by CCI?

CCI's actions were not a violation of the law.

Section 15 of the Competition Act provides that no proceeding of the commission shall be invalid due to **any vacancy in, or any defect in the constitution** of the Commission.

As per section 15, any **irregularity in the procedure of the Commission** not affecting the merits of the case shall not make the proceeding invalid.

What are the important questions raised by CCI action?

The first is the delay in the **appointment of a new chairperson**.

The second is that the government was unable to find a suitable successor by the time of Chairman retirement. In this scenario, a **reference to the law ministry** on the issue of a quorum ahead of the event would have also **reduced the anxiety for companies and investors** waiting for their deals to be cleared.

The third is whether a two-member commission has the **ability to scrutinise the merits** of so many deals.

58. [Challenging Google – New AI-driven search can be disruptive](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Challenging Google – New AI-driven search can be disruptive” published in the **Business Standard** on **13th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Relevance: About AI-driven search engines.

News: Artificial intelligence (AI) programs involving Natural Language Processing (NLP) have caused a shift in the way people use web searches. AI-driven search engines may lead to radical changes in the way search is monetised via advertising, and it could challenge Google's dominant search engine.

What is ChatGPT?

Must read: [What is OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot, why it has become a viral sensation](#)

What is the potential of Generative AI?

Read more: [The potential of generative AI: creating media with simple text prompts](#)

How AI-driven search engines are different from Conventional engines?

Conventional engines list only relevant links. But the AI-driven search engines such as ChatGPT and Bard are different from Conventional engines as **a)** They have behavioural sense and they offer more “human” filtering of search results, **b)** They present search results in an essay format rather than just displaying links, **c)** They have the ability to write essays or even poetry on demand. AI-assisted fiction is another possibility that may change the publishing industry.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

They also have other applications such as one can use ChatGPT to write software code to perform various functions, or perhaps using NLP to build an autonomous driving application.

What are the challenges with AI-driven search engines?

The AI-driven search engines have the following concerns, **a)** Though their searches are plausible and comprehensive, they are not necessarily accurate, **b)** There is a possibility that they will over-reach assertions. Conspiracy theories and opinions can be presented as facts if they are stated by “authorities”. For instance, Bard asserted the **James Webb Space Telescope** was the first telescope to take pictures of an exoplanet, which is wrong, **c)** Their ability to write essays and poems might create a new kind of plagiarism.

What do AI-driven search engines mean as a business activity?

NLP-based searches could lead to an entirely new revenue model for one of the Web’s biggest market segments. Advertising revenue share might move to new players, or perhaps create some entirely different revenue model.

Google has been dominating search and it has built an empire around the cash cow of resulting advertising revenues. This is finally being challenged now with AI-driven search engines.

59. Unmet needs in wireless regulations

Source: The post is based on an article “**Unmet needs in wireless regulations**” published in **Business Standard** on **14th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economy

Relevance: concerns associated with telecom sectors in India

News: The communication sector in India is suffering from various hurdles and there is a need to resolve these.

What are the problems with the communication sector in India?

Lack of expenditure: The expenditure on roads and railways is twice the amount on communications.

Lack of proper regulatory policy: The communication sector in India lacks proper policy regulations as seen in the case of Vodafone.

Vodafone was imposed with **retrospective taxes** in 2007. However, it was later set aside by the Supreme Court.

Vodafone and other operators **fought licence fees claimed** on non-telecom revenues included in aggregate gross revenues (**AGR**) since 2003 while the interest on dues kept on rising.

However, in 2021 a four-year temporary relief package was announced on debt repayments while the interest kept on rising on the dues.

Due to these improper solutions Vodafone and its operators kept on suffering. However, on 3rd February, **the government decided to convert Vodafone’s dues into government-held equity**.

These all show the **irresponsible behaviour of the government** and lack of proper policy measures which made Vodafone to suffer for a decade.

Wireless policies and the use of optical fibres: As per ICRA, full-scale 5G deployments across India would require expenditure of about Rs 3 trillion because nearly two-thirds of the towers lack fibre connectivity.

However, looking at the high debt of telecoms and high cost of fibres, it is unexpected that telecommunication companies would invest heavily.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for the policy makers to come up with wireless policies based on successful models in other countries.

Other requirements: There is a need to **enable 6GHz for Wi-Fi, allow speeds of up to 10 Gbps, and support for local product development** and production instead of relying on imports.

60. [Indian Air Force's revised doctrine adopts a holistic approach to the country's security imperatives](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Indian Air Force's revised doctrine adopts a holistic approach to the country's security imperatives**” published in **The Indian Express** on **14th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance– Future strategies of defence forces

News– Recently air force has released its revised doctrine

Why has India been reluctant to use air power?

There is inadequate understanding of the **inherently complex and rapid technology-driven changes** in air power's characteristics and capabilities.

India has a **traditional surface-dominant security outlook**. It stems from dealing with a primarily continental threat.

What are salient features of Indian Air Force revised doctrine?

It underscores the necessity of a **more holistic approach** towards India's security and what aerospace can do to bolster it.

It provides for a clearer understanding of the **redefined characteristics of aerospace power and its expanded capabilities** for national interests and strengthening regional security.

It provides a **clear articulation of the Service objectives**. It has evolved out of combat experience, assessments of international conflicts and its experience gained in international exercises.

It covers the **entire spectrum of future aerospace applications**. Apart from peace and war, this also includes the unique **no-war-no-peace condition** confronting the country. **State-sponsored terrorism**, increasing border stand-offs and internal security challenges make peace in India uneasy.

The doctrine has the potential to accommodate major changes in wartime strategy. It allows for the use of **future precepts in the employment of aerospace power** in the Indian security context. The doctrine's focus on the criticality of controlling the skies.

The **IAF's robust joint credentials** remain a dominant flavour in its wartime air strategy. It is laterally connected with the land and maritime strategies.

The impacts of **IAF offensive capability** on the enemy's politico-military will and ability to wage war have been given significant doctrinal salience. This was evident in the use of air power in the 1971 war when the air force targeted **energy systems and communication networks**.

The necessity of a **multi-domain approach** in India's future joint military strategy, battle space transparency, combat networks, cyber and electronic warfare, information warfare constitute the foundation of IAF's future air strategy.

Concepts of operations, human resources, training, and operational testing and evaluation remain priority doctrinal precepts.

The document underscores the IAF's increasing role in the **strategy for security and growth for all in the region (SAGAR), as well as in the larger Indo-Pacific construct**.

The doctrine acknowledges that other services like **civil aviation and space agencies** also contribute to this strength. The document refrains from asserting ownership of this arena.

It acknowledges that **future aerospace and defence capabilities, related R&D, and associated civil-military industrial capabilities** are national force multipliers.

61. [The 4 Pillars Holding Up India's Expanding Middle](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"The 4 Pillars Holding Up India's Expanding Middle"** published in **The Times of India** on **14th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Relevance: About 4S framework for middle class prosperity.

News: A sharp decline in poverty levels, now down to about 16% of the population, is witnessed in India due to the emergence of the middle class at the national level. According to an estimate, about one-third of the population is estimated to have entered the middle-class.

This is because of government's systematic approach to increase middle-class wellbeing in the past. According to the author, these initiatives can be articulated through the 4S framework: Sampannata, Surakshit Bhavishya, Shreshtha Jeevan and Saralta.

What are the 4S framework for middle class prosperity?

Sampannata: Enrichment through inflation control and loans

Between 2014 and 2022, annual inflation was 4. 6%. Despite multiple global crises, the CPI was at 5. 7% in December 2022, which was much lower than many G20 countries.

This ensured **a) greater liquidity** for the middle-class, **b) lower EMIs** resulted in decline in loan rates. For example, student loan rates were priced about 8% in 2022 from around 14% in 2014, **c) middle-class families found lower EMIs easier to purchase more houses**, cars and also take more loans for the higher education, **d) one-nation one-tax initiative of GST** has led to gross savings of an estimated Rs 18 lakh-crore, which works out to an annual household saving of Rs 12,000, **e) 120 million of 380 million beneficiaries of the PM Mudra Yojana** were middle-class individuals.

Surakshit Bhavishya: Securing a healthy future

This includes significant government efforts to provide affordable healthcare and quality education. Steps in this direction include **a) 353 new universities in the last nine years**, **b) Opening up of 15 new AIIMS and 261 new medical colleges**, **c) 41 Indian universities featured in global rankings in 2023 compared to just nine in 2014**, **d) 50-90% cheaper generic medicines available at 9,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras**, **e) 87 crore free screenings is done at 1. 5 lakh**

Ayushman Bharat Centres.

Shreshtha Jeevan: A better life

-By 2022, India built 1. 65 lakh kms of national highways and had the **second largest road network in the world**, after the US, due to a **tenfold increase in capital expenditure** on roads and bridges,

-India now has metro connectivity in 20 cities. India is now a year away from having the third largest metro network globally.

-India has the **highest per capita mobile data consumption rate** and among the **lowest cost of data per GB** in the world.

Nearly 80% of India's 120 crore mobile phone users and 80 crore internet users are expected to receive 5G connectivity within a year. If done it **will be the world's fastest 5G roll-out**.

-Apart from that, visible improvements is seen in **housing, transportation, tap water connections, and waste management**. On an average, **power is now available for 22 hours** against 12. 5 hours in 2015.

Saralta: Hassle-free existence

-India's cashless digital payment ecosystem is hailed as among the best in the world. UPI accounted for 65% of the total digital transactions in 2021-22.

-DigiLocker facility for paperless certificate authentication has been embraced by the middle-class.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

Overall, India's rising global profile in a multitude of areas has inculcated a new sense of pride among Indian middleclass. Indian government remains committed to boosting prosperity for the middle-class through the 4S framework, providing an alternative development model to the world.

62. Make Then Sell – India's ambitious defence export target comes up against long delays in product development

Source: The post is based on the article **"Make Then Sell – India's ambitious defence export target comes up against long delays in product development"** published in **The Times of India** on **14th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: About India's defence export.

News: AeroIndia 2023 which kicked off recently is not just being promoted as the biggest exhibition of India's air power but also a significant platform to push Indian defence manufacturing to the next level.

Recently, the PM has announced an ambitious target of \$5 billion annual defence exports by 2024-25.

What is the significance of AeroIndia for India's defence export target?

Facilitate integration: Given the changing nature of warfare, the **integration of air power with other arms of the military** has become crucial. For instance, Asia is largely a seascape. So India's ability to protect its interests will largely depend on the integration of naval and air assets.

Boost defence production and exports: AeroIndia will boost the government's efforts towards self-reliance, a joint production of advanced technologies, and increase defence exports. All these have immediate implications for India's strategic security.

What are the challenges with India's defence export target?

India's defence exports have increased from just Rs 1,520 crore in 2017 to a record Rs 14,000 crore in 2021-22. But still, there is significant headroom for growth.

India's defence sector exports have two significant issues.

Firstly, India's defence **exports have largely comprised low to medium-tech items** like personal protective equipment, offshore patrol vessels, spares for radars, coastal surveillance systems, helicopters, and electronic and engineering parts.

Secondly, exports are further held back by advanced platforms like LCA being **produced at a very slow pace**, with even domestic orders yet to be satisfied.

To overcome the India's defence export challenges, **a) India must require quicker production timelines, b) Different arms of the defence industry – private and government – need to work together.**

63. Let's Go Against the Grain of Wheat, Rice Bias

Source: The post is based on the article **"Let's Go Against The Grain Of Wheat, Rice Bias"** published in **The Times of India** on **15th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Agriculture

Relevance: **benefits of millets and measures taken to promote it**

News: The article discusses the reasons behind the decline in the use of millets and the efforts taken by the government to revive it.

What were the reasons behind the decline in the use of millets?

One of the reasons behind the decline in the use of millets is the **green revolution**.

Green revolution technology and policy environment gave rice and wheat an advantage over millets and millets were considered as **inferior crops**, despite of its multiple benefits.

What are the benefits of millets?

Millets are **nutritious**. They reduce – **a)** Iron deficiency anaemia, **b)** Risk of type II diabetes, **c)** BMI and obesity, **d)** Calcium deficiency **e)** helps with hyperlipidemia.

Millets are also found to help overcome malnutrition. Within millets, **minor millets are even more nutritious and healthy**.

Moreover, **millets are the least water demanding crops**. They can live in harsh environments and withstand various biotic and abiotic stresses like rise in temperature, drought etc.

However, the government has taken several measures to promote millets.

What steps have taken by the government to promote millets?

GoI and some states have taken some initiatives since 2012 to promote millets.

Millets were officially **declared as Nutri Cereals in 2018** which was declared as the **National Year of Millets**.

India has also brought millets on the global platform by **getting UNGA** to declare the year **2023 as an International Year of Millet**.

However, despite these efforts, there is hardly any improvement in the consumption of millets.

As per **NSSO's consumer expenditure survey**, the consumption of millets amongst the lower section of the society has declined from 1. 59 kg millets/ month per capita in 1993-94 to 0. 27 kg by 2011-2012.

However, the budget 2023-24 has tried to address the issues related to millets.

What are some efforts announced in the Budget 2023-24 for millets?

The budget has designated millets as “**Shree Anna**”. Therefore, emphasis needs to be given to expand the area under millet and increase their productivity by making them attractive to the producers.

The budget has also announced **support for R&D in millets** through a centre of excellence to be set up in Indian Institute of Millets Research, Hyderabad.

What can be the way ahead?

First, India needs to speed up technological development for millets. Millet specific machines and equipment need to be developed to handle large scale production.

Second, Producers need to be empowered through FPOs, SHGs and cooperatives, to take advantage of rising consumer preference and willingness to pay better prices for millets.

Read More: [Millet Production in India – Explained](#)

64. [Generative AI prompts serious questions of copyright](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Generative AI prompts serious questions of copyright**” published in the **Livemint** on **15th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Awareness in the fields of IT.

Relevance: About AI generated art.

News: The improvements in artificial intelligence (AI) with ChatGPT has shown the importance of generative AI.

How generative AI aid in creating AI generated art?

-Ordinary people with no formal artistic training can create stunning visual arts and images in the style of famous artists using generative AI tools like DALL-E and Stable Diffusion.

Read more: [The potential of generative AI: creating media with simple text prompts](#)

What are the challenges associated with AI generated art?

Issue of copyright: To create output in the styles of so many artists, the AI must have been trained on hundreds of samples of their work. Every output it generates is an original work that has no one-to-one correspondence to any part or whole of any image of a given artist.

However, it is not clear whether it constitute the offence of “copying” under copyright law or not. The **US Copyright Office** has already declared that AI generated art is not entitled to intellectual property protection as it lacks the “nexus between the human mind and creative expression”.

Read more: [Challenging Google – New AI-driven search can be disruptive](#)

65. [Boosting productivity – Nano-fertilisers will improve efficiency](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Boosting productivity – Nano-fertilisers will improve efficiency**” published in the **Business Standard** on **15th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies.

Relevance: About advantages of Nano-fertilisers.

News: Recently, the government approved the commercial release of nano-DAP (di-ammonium phosphate). The first batch of nano-DAP will hit the market in the upcoming kharif sowing season.

About nano-DAP

DAP is the second-most used plant nutrient in India. The actual production cost of conventional DAP is around Rs 4,000 per bag.

On the other hand, a 500 ml bottle of nano-DAP, equivalent to a 50-kg bag of conventional DAP, is likely to cost the farmers around Rs 600. It is less than half the subsidised price of Rs 1,350 for normal DAP.

About other nano-fertilisers

The government already rolled out [nano-urea](#) in 2021. Urea is the most-consumed fertiliser in India.

Nano versions of the third-most important plant nutrient potash and micronutrients like zinc and copper are said to be in advanced stages of development.

What are the advantages of Nano-fertilisers?

More effective suppliers of plant nutrition: Nano-fertilisers containing soil nutrients in ultra-minuscule-sized particles, measuring less than one-billionth of a millimetre. They generally prove more effective suppliers of plant nutrition because of **a)** the larger number of particles per unit of volume, **b)** a higher cumulative surface area, **c)** greater water solubility and **d)** after sprayed on leaves, nano-particles easily penetrate the stomata and other openings to get assimilated in plant cells.

Hence, they also provide increased yield on the field. For instance, crops sprayed with liquid nano-urea have been found to give a 3-16% higher yield than those treated with equivalent quantities of granulated urea.

Saving on fertiliser subsidies: India’s fertiliser subsidy bill is estimated at Rs 2.25 trillion this year. It can be dropped down to nil with the introduction of nano-fertilisers.

Provide chances for export: The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative, which has pioneered the research, development and commercialisation of these patent-protected nano fertilisers is already receiving requests from other countries for nano fertilisers.

The **other advantages** are, **a)** Nano-fertilisers will make India self-reliant in vital farm inputs, **b)** minimise the damage to the environment as they do not pollute air, soil and water like normal fertilisers do, **c)** facilitate higher farm output at a lower cost to boost the profitability of agriculture and **d)** raise farmers’ income.

They make farming sustainable and eco-friendly.

Read more: [Cost advantages – Nano-fertilisers will reduce subsidy outgo](#)

66. [Flying high into Amrit Kaal](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Flying high into Amrit Kaal**” published in **The Indian Express** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure

Relevance– Air connectivity

News– India’s civil aviation policy is bearing fruit. It is set to reach new heights

What is the status of the civil aviation industry in India?

India is the **third largest domestic civil aviation market** in the world after China and the US. Domestic passengers more than doubled from 60 million in 2014 to 143 million in 2020.

There has also been a **significant increase in international air passengers** — from 23 million to 35 million.

Indian flight operators have a **fleet size of approximately 750 aircraft**. The fleet size is expected to increase rapidly.

India’s civil aviation sector has also provided **employment opportunities** for engineers, trained technicians and airline service staff.

What is the UDAN scheme and its achievements?

In 2017, the Government of India started a **Regional Connectivity Scheme called UDAN** to make flight operations to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities **commercially viable**.

It approved a budget for the revival of existing unserved and underserved airports and airstrips through the Regional Connectivity Scheme.

Today, approximately 475 UDAN routes have been operationalised.

Since its inception, **over 1.14 crore passengers** have travelled in more than 2.16 Lakh UDAN flights. Rs 2,300 crore has been paid to selected airlines by the government as a part of the viability gap funding.

What are other steps taken by the government under civil aviation policy?

MRO sector– The growth in the country’s fleet size is positively correlated with the growth in MRO-related work.

The market size of the MRO sector in India stood at **around \$2 billion**. It is catering to 15% of our domestic MRO work.

The government issued **new MRO Guidelines** to encourage MRO organisations and OEMs to set up workshops in India.

Many steps taken towards making India a global hub of MRO. It includes **100% FDI permitted via automatic route, a liberalised policy for borrowing and lending** in foreign currency and Indian currency and **reduction of GST** from 18% to 5% with full Input Tax Credit.

Manpower– **1165 commercial pilot licences** were issued in 2022. This is the largest number of licences over the last decade.

The need for pilots has also led to an increase in **Flight Training organisations**. Currently, India has 35 approved FTOs with 53 bases and an additional 10 are on the anvil.

Similarly, the number of Air Traffic Controllers has increased from a little over 2,000 in 2012 to close to 4,000 in 2022.

Drones– Last year, the government issued guidelines for **Production Linked Incentives** for drones with an outlay of Rs 120 crore over three years. There has been a **massive liberalisation of the drone policy** under which 25 forms have been reduced to just five.

Agriculture sector– Civil aviation policy has contributed to agriculture also. The **Krishi Udan Scheme** is focused on **transporting perishable food products** of farmers from the hilly areas, north-eastern states and tribal areas.

India's civil aviation ministry has also been instrumental in **rescuing Indians and foreign nationals** during emergencies.

As a part of the **Vande Bharat Mission**, India facilitated the travel of 1.83 crore passengers during the various COVID-19 waves. **Operation Ganga** rescued 22,500 Indian students from Ukraine during the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Tourism sector– The **synergy between tourism and civil aviation** in propagating India's tourism potential is well-known. The Ministry of Tourism also funds more than 50 routes and has approved another 10 routes under the RCS-UDAN Scheme.

67. [A manifesto for tackling the silent pandemic of AMR](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“A manifesto for tackling the silent pandemic of AMR”** published in **The Hindu** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance– Various diseases and treatments

News– As the current G-20 president, and as a vulnerable country, India has a key role in ensuring that AMR remains high on the global health agenda.

What shows the prevalence of antimicrobial resistance?

New drugs have become resistant to drugs. There is **rising misuse and overuse of antibiotics** in humans and animals.

In 2019, AMR was associated with an estimated 4.95 million human deaths. A 2018 **report by OECD** warned of a phenomenal increase of resistance to antibiotics by 2030.

AMR adds to the **burden of communicable diseases** and **strains the health systems** of a country. **ICMR study in 2022** showed that the resistance level increases from 5% to 10% every year for broad-spectrum antimicrobials.

An **Indian Network for Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance study** indicated a high rate of resistance to commonly used drugs such as ciprofloxacin, erythromycin and clindamycin.

According to **WHO**, resistance to ciprofloxacin varied from 8.4% to 92.9% for *Escherichia coli* and from 4.1% to 79.4% for *Klebsiella pneumoniae*.

The **global epidemic of TB** has been severely impacted by multidrug resistance. Patients have less than a 60% chance of recovery.

What are the impacts of AMR?

Microbial resistance to antibiotics has made it harder to **treat infections** such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and several food-borne diseases.

AMR also imposes a huge health cost on the patient in the form of **longer hospitalisation, health complications and delayed recovery**.

It puts patients undergoing **major surgeries and treatments**, such as chemotherapy, at a **greater Risk**.

What were important developments during the Third Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance?

It was held in Muscat. It led to the adoption of the **Muscat Ministerial Manifesto on AMR**.

The Muscat Manifesto recognised the need to **accelerate political commitments** in the implementation of **One Health action** for controlling the spread of AMR.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

It also recognised the need to address the impact of AMR not only on humans but also on animals, and in areas of **environmental health, food security and economic growth and development**.

The conference focused on **three health targets**: reduce the total amount of antimicrobials used in the agri-food system **at least by 30-50% by 2030**.

Eliminate **use in animals and food production** of antimicrobials that are medically important for human health

Ensure that by 2030 at least **60% of overall antibiotic consumption** in humans is from the **WHO “Access” group of antibiotics**.

What is the One Health approach?

It requires all stakeholders to work together towards an **integrated programme** linking challenges of humans, terrestrial and aquatic animals, plant health, food and feed production and the environment.

What are the steps taken by the Indian government to overcome AMR?

The **National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (2017-21)** emphasised the **effectiveness** of the government’s initiatives for hand hygiene and sanitation programmes such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Kayakalp and Swachh Swasth Sarvatra.

The government has also attempted to **increase community awareness** about **healthier and better food production practices**, especially in the animal food industry.

The **National Health Policy 2017** also offered specific guidelines regarding use of antibiotics, restricting the use of antibiotics for growth promotion in livestock. It also called for **scrutiny of prescriptions** to assess antibiotic usage in hospitals and among doctors.

What is the way forward to overcome AMR?

The **various G-20 health summits** spread through 2023 offer an opportunity for India to ensure that all aspects of AMR are addressed and countries commit to progress.

Some key areas for action are:

Surveillance of priority pathogens and sharing of data, including through WHO’s GLASS platform.

Regulatory and policy action to stop use of antibiotics that are important for human health in animals.

No use of antibiotics for growth promotion in animals.

More **government investment in research and innovation** for new antibiotics.

Explore **use of vaccines** to prevent certain infections due to AMR organisms in humans and animals.

Special focus on **combating TB and drug-resistant TB**.

Further, There is also an urgent need to reduce the usage of **antimicrobials in the agri-food system**. Countries such as the Netherlands and Thailand have decreased their usage by almost 50%.

68. Our labour market’s playing field is in the process of being levelled

Source: The post is based on the article “Our labour market’s playing field is in the process of being levelled” published in **Live Mint** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: evolution of the Indian multinational companies

News: The article discusses how the Indian companies evolved with the time and the way they have provided job opportunities to the Indian labour market.

How did the companies evolve in India?

Under the license raj: MNCs in those times relied on their regulatory connectivity and their capital, technology and product investments bred higher productivity and wages.

Companies at that time focused more on performance, potential and hard work than a surname.

After the reforms of 1991: These reforms ended license raj and brought changes in the business climate for Indian entrepreneurs. The changes were reflected in staffing, financing and governing of businesses.

Companies like Tata, Reliance and Mahindra attracted global and local investors. These Indian entrepreneurs distinguished between their shareholder, board member and executive role in companies.

They also executed mindful strategies that offered employees vision, purpose, meritocracy and growth.

Later, these changes were also seen in a wide range of companies like IT (Infosys, TCS, HCL, etc), finance (HDFC, ICICI, Axis) and consumer goods (Marico, Dabur, Britannia, etc).

The combination of growth and governance led to a massive expansion in the **price-to-earnings multiples of their stocks**.

It also led to five changes – **a)** multinationals shifted from the European model (country head as CEO) to the American model (country head as ambassador with global vertical reporting), **b)** institutionally funded startups (Flipkart, Ola, Ather, Nyka, etc.) attracted experienced managers with attractive equity, **c)** rising prosperity made self-expression a priority, and a career became an individual, not a family decision, **d)** society, economy and citizens realized that it is not necessary to be Western to be modern and people became more confident and secure about their future and identity and **e)** new business and startup ideas started coming up.

What does the future hold for the Indian companies?

There have been rapid changes in the Indian companies and with the time it would be difficult to categorize what is an Indian company because today everything has been globalized and interdependent.

For example, an Indian car has imported products, HDFC is an Indian bank despite being majority-owned by foreigners, etc.

Furthermore, the diminishing labour market advantage for the Indian companies will become irrelevant with the coming time because it is the best talent that will be employed.

69. [R&D: An inside job – For innovation to power economic growth, Indian industry must raise its investment in in-house R&D five-fold](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**R&D: An inside job – For innovation to power economic growth, Indian industry must raise its investment in in-house R&D five-fold**” published in the **Business Standard** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Development and employment.

Relevance: About R&D investment in India.

News: India lags in Research and development (R&D) investment both on the government side and industrial side.

About the R&D investment around the globe

The world invests a little over 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) in R&D. Of the \$2 trillion spent on global R&D, the top five (of over 180) countries (**the US, China, Japan, Germany and South Korea**) alone account for three-quarters.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

On the industries side, the top five industries (pharmaceuticals, automobiles, technology hardware, software and electronics) account for almost 73% of all industrial R&D. Within industrial R&D top 20 companies account for 22% of global industrial R&D.

About R&D investment in India

India is now the world's fifth largest economy. But in total R&D investment, India ranked 16th, below Israel.

Note: Israel is a country with a GDP of one-sixth India's, and a population under one-hundredth of India's.

On the industrial R&D investment scale, with \$7 billion in investments India is ranked 22nd between Poland and Singapore. In short, Indian firms invest 0.3% of GDP in in-house R&D, compared to a world average of 1.5%.

The European Commission report stated that India has only 24 firms among the top 2,500 investors in R&D worldwide. On the other hand, 822, 678, 233 and 114 firms are from the US, China, Japan and Germany, respectively.

What are the reasons for low industrial R&D investment in India?

Sector-wise global industrial R&D expenditure (2021)							
Sector	R&D expenditure (\$billion)	Total number of firms	Number of firms in top five economies				
			USA	Germany	Japan	China	India
Pharmaceuticals & biotechnology	240.51	478	263	10	25	79	11
Software & computer services	225.84	336	196	6	5	73	2
Technology hardware & equipment	185.62	207	71	3	15	47	0
Automobiles & parts	155.48	148	28	14	25	45	5
Electronic & electrical equipment	93.26	249	41	10	30	106	0
Industrial Engineering	39.48	167	28	19	22	52	0
Construction & materials	34.86	65	4	2	10	35	0
Chemicals	28.25	114	21	8	28	33	1
Health care equipment & services	25.41	89	46	7	6	13	0
General industrials	23.10	64	15	5	12	16	0
Top 3 sectors	651.99	1,021	530	19	45	199	13
Top 10 sectors	1,051.86	1,917	713	84	178	499	19
Total (2,500)	1,236.06	2,500	822	114	233	678	24/31*

*Considering the Centre for Technology, Innovation and Economic Research's (CTIER's) list of top 100 R&D spenders, there would be 31 Indian firms in the global 2,500 R&D spenders.
Note: (i) Figures in euros were converted to dollars using the EUR-USD exchange rate of 1.13 as on 31 December 2021 and as mentioned in the EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard; Source: EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard (2022); CTIER

Source: Business Standard

India's limited presence in top sectors: Based on the Centre for Technology, Innovation and Economic Research (CTIER) list, India has no firms in five (technology hardware, electronic equipment, aerospace, general industrials, construction materials) of the 10 top industrial sectors.

Note: India's most profitable firms are in financial services, petrochemicals, metal processing and software.

Missing giant investor: India is missing one giant investor in in-house R&D. For instance, India's top-ranked R&D investment firm is Tata Motors with an annual R&D spend of \$3.5 billion globally. But at the global level, it stands only at the 58th position.

Lacks government investment: Each of the top seven global firms invests more than all of India's R&D investment, this includes every firm, university and government laboratory put together.

How does India's industrial R&D investment compare to that of China?

Low service sector investment: Indian software firms are service firms to the world's product firms. But most of the top 10 Chinese software firms are also service firms. India's top 10 software firms invest only 1% in R&D compared to 8% in China.

Data for 2014 industrial R&D investment showed that India had 26 firms to China's 301. But in 2021, China has 678 firms to India's 24.

Read more: [Revitalizing public R&D could transform innovation, and give meaning to our doctrine of strategic autonomy](#)

What needs to be done to improve R&D investment?

Change governance structure: India needs to drive change in industrial structure, use trade policy to force competition between Indian firms, and drastically reform India's public research system.

Utilise talent: India has an abundance of talent. This is visible from the 100 top investors in R&D as two-thirds of them have R&D centres in India. Hence, India should train and expose fresh engineers.

Overall, India should raise the profile of investment in in-house R&D in each of the firms.

70. [The Express View on climate report: Shore up the defences](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"The Express View on climate report: Shore up the defences"** published in the **Indian Express** on **16th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation.

Relevance: About WMO report on sea level rise.

News: World Meteorological Organisation's (WMO) report on the impact of sea-level rise on global peace stirred debate in the UN Security Council. The report adds to the growing corpus of studies that underline the climate vulnerabilities of people living in low-lying areas.

What are the key highlights of the WMO report on sea level rise?

More than one in 10 people worldwide, including those in megacities like Mumbai, New York, London, Dhaka, Shanghai and Buenos Aires, could face severe turmoil even if global warming is miraculously limited to 1.5 degrees (Paris climate pact's goal).

Read more: [Sea level rise is certain](#)

What should be done to prevent and mitigate the impacts of WMO report on sea level rise?

The task for policymakers is to **prepare for massive social and economic dislocation**. This will require **building resilience** at several levels. This can be done by **a)** investing in R&D, infrastructure and warning systems to mitigate the loss of lives and property, **b)** Protecting coasts by engineering, technological and ecological interventions like creating physical barriers, permeable pavements, sopping waters and reviving mangroves, **c)** Armoured shorelines can also upset the delicate ecological balance of coastal habitats.

Read more: [Sea levels could rise by up to 2.8 feet in India, says govt](#)

Globally **technology and fund transfer commitments** at UN summits have to be in proportion to the gravity of the challenge.

71. [Shuffling feet: On foreign trade and policy responses](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **"Shuffling feet: On foreign trade and policy responses"** published in **The Hindu** on **17th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: changes in exports and imports

News: The article discusses the changing trends of export and import in India.

How has export and import been in India for 2023?

The exports from India got a disappointing start in 2023. Merchandise shipments fell 6.6% in January.

Engineering exports fell 10%; pharma products lost momentum along with 14 other products.

However, **with the exports, even imports are also falling down.**

If this trend continues, **India's current account deficit** for 2022-23 will be lower than the projected CAD by most of the agencies.

What are the reasons behind slowing export and import?

The drop in imports suggests that **domestic demand growth is decreasing** while the decline in export is due to the **global economic slowdown.**

India's weaker trade balance for the fiscal year 2022-23 was due to the two reasons- **a)** a slowing world economy hurting exports and **b)** resilient domestic demand shoring up imports.

However, these reasons seem to be diminishing.

What is the way ahead?

Economic growth is expected to increase in the major economies.

For example, U.S. retail sales grew faster than expected in January and the U.K.-based trading businesses now expect an increase in the turnover this March.

These will bring opportunities for India's export markets. Therefore, industry bodies and the government must work together to help exporters and export grow by capturing these global opportunities.

72. Use a clear compass to navigate our challenges and opportunities

Source- The post is based on the article **"Use a clear compass to navigate our challenges and opportunities"** published in **Live mint** on **17th February 2023.**

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Socio-economic development

News- The article emphasizes the need to analyse the economic and geopolitical conditions affecting the world.

What is the present macroeconomic scenario around the world?

According to **World Bank projections**, the share of trade as a percentage of global GDP climbed from **roughly 25% in 1970 to 52% in 2020.**

Global value chains (GVCs) have grown and spread across the globe. Asia is expected to generate **\$22 trillion** in new wealth between 2020 and 2025.

In 2023, emerging markets will grow more than twice as quickly as developed markets, predicts **the IMF.**

What are the other events that have impacted the world?

Climate change is yet another phenomenon that has had an impact on not just the world economy, but also our entire society. The **decade from 2011 to 2020** has been the warmest on record.

It has become essential for nations to include climate change in all policy deliberations.

Digitalization has also strongly influenced all aspects of society which picked up steam after the pandemic struck.

How can India push for its interests in this situation?

Strategic integration with GVCs is one option. It can increase production by transferring information, investing in them and using international best practices.

India can benefit from **investing in climate-resilient and sustainable infrastructure.** According to a **World Bank analysis**, investing in more resilient infrastructure would produce an average net benefit of **\$4.2 trillion.**

The country has an opportunity to continuously expand their **own digital infrastructure.**

A significant digital payment platform in India, the **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)**, has enrolled 376 banks and facilitated 7.3 billion transactions, with a total value of ₹11.9 trillion.

What is the way forward?

India will soon have to deal with many of the **same issues** affecting the rest of the world, such as rising debt levels, inflation, food and energy crises, and geopolitical conflicts.

Overcoming obstacles in a changing external environment necessitates **deliberate action** across all socioeconomic domains.

It also necessitates a **mentality change** that accepts the certainty of change.

73. [Deep sea fish conservation must not go adrift](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Deep sea fish conservation must not go adrift**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment

Relevance: Conservation related issues

News- The article explains the need of deep sea fish conservation.

What is the judgement of SC on fishing in the high seas?

The [Supreme Court of India](#) has given permission to fishermen for using **purse seine fishing gear** to fish beyond territorial waters and within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Tamil Nadu. But, they have to observe certain restrictions.

It seems to be **more concerned about regulating fishing** with administrative and transparency measures than about the conservation measures and obligations which a coastal state owes in its EEZ under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.

What are the existing conventions related to conservation?

Under [Articles 56.1\(a\) and 56.1\(b\)\(iii\)](#) of UNCLOS, coastal states have **sovereign rights** to ensure that the living and non-living resources of the EEZ are used, conserved and managed. But, they should not be subject to overexploitation.

Access to the zone by foreign fleets is also solely within the coastal state’s discretion and subject to its laws and regulations.

In order to prevent overexploitation, coastal States must determine the **Total Allowable Catch (TAC)** in the EEZ in light of the best scientific evidence available.

Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna 1993 is another instrument. It focuses on TAC and distribution of allocations among the parties to the SBT. TAC and the catch quotas are aimed at putting sustainable use into practice among fishermen.

What are the international legal efforts in this regard?

There are several regional organisations that either prohibit the use of large drift nets or at least call for their prohibition. The examples are the **1989 Tarawa Declaration of the South Pacific Forum**.

The **United Nations General Assembly** passed **Resolutions 44/225 (1989) and 46/215 (1991)** supported and strengthened this development, calling for a moratorium on all large-scale pelagic drift net fishing vessels in high seas.

What needs to be looked by higher courts on fishing in the high seas?

The top court should seek guidance from the obligations arising from the multilateral and regional conventions which are meant to bring in sustainable fishing practices.

The Court’s final judgement needs to look into **non-selective fishing methods** by purse seiners. It results in the by-catch of other marine living species which could include endangered species. The guidance from the [Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna 1993 \(SBT\)](#) could have also been sourced by the top court to enable recovery of depleted fishing stocks.

74. [Fasten Your Seatbelt, India – Air India’s huge order has multiple implications, for the airline, for civil aviation, for policy and for manufacturing. Here’s a deep dive](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Fasten Your Seatbelt, India – Air India’s huge order has multiple implications, for the airline, for civil aviation, for policy and for manufacturing. Here’s a deep dive**” published in **The Times of India** on **17th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Relevance: About the Indian aviation market.

News: Recently, the Tata Group, which acquired Air India, has placed an order for 470 new aircraft. This is the largest ever deal in aviation in India.

About the new deal for Air India

Read here: [Modi, Macron, Biden announce: 470 Airbus, Boeing planes for Air India](#)

Where does the deal offer Air India?

Domestic significance: Locally, Air India faces a formidable competitor from IndiGo which flies a fleet of 308 aircraft and has more than 55% of the market locked up.

There’s also a fast-growing competitor in Akasa, which has captured more than 2% of the market in five months since its launch.

Air India after combining four entities (the others are Air India Express, AIX Connect and Vistara) has a fleet of 220 aircraft with 26% of the market. Hence, the deal will enable Air India to engage in a complete fleet renewal coupled with significant expansion.

International significance: The deal will **a)** Match features of international airlines like Emirates, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, British Airways and Lufthansa and **b)** Enable Air India to enter, capture traffic flows and build foundations in markets such as Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and SAARC nations.

What does the deal offer for the Indian aviation market?

Over time, the Tata Group aims to bring commercial aircraft manufacturing into the country. If it was for Airbus, then the set-up of an assembly line will be their second assembly line in Asia after China. This would pave the way for boosting manufacturing and technology transfer agreements with Indian firms.

Note: Boeing already has an existing joint venture with Boeing on the defence side.

The deal will also help India to **a)** Forecast Indian aviation sector growth at a global level, **b)** Improve India’s economic growth prospects and geopolitical dynamics, and **c)** Help in leveraging geopolitical dynamics to provide a competitive edge for India’s international relations.

What should be done to improve the Indian aviation market?

The Indian aviation industry has two major challenges. **a)** India has a complex fleet infrastructure which challenges the seamless induction and deployment of mammoth aircraft orders, **b)** The deal does not provide adequate returns on capital unless there is a smooth deployment of aircraft. To overcome that, India needs policy changes to **develop airports as hubs, ensure proper air-traffic management, presence of adequate maintenance facilities and trained manpower.**

75. [Supreme Court must use cases pending against UAPA to examine its scope](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Supreme Court must use cases pending against UAPA to examine its scope**” published in **The Indian Express** on **17th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance: Measures adopted by government to deal with terrorism

News- In recent times, arbitrary use of India’s omnibus anti-terror law, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967 has drawn attention.

What are the prominent anti-terror laws that have been used by the Indian government against terror activities?

Indian anti-terror laws include the **Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act** passed in 1985, and the **Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA)** passed in 2002.

In 2004, started **using UAPA** against the terror activities. The government used UAPA to declare illegal any organization questioning **India's sovereignty**.

Since then, the law has undergone **three significant revisions** — 2008, 2013 and 2019. Each modification has made it more stringent.

What are the problems associated with the legal approach adopted by the Indian government against terrorism?

The government has prosecuted **political dissidents** under anti-terror laws. But on the global stage, in 2022, India objected to the inclusion of “**right-wing extremism**” in the definition of terrorism in the **UNGA Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**.

There appears to be a significant difference between what India considers to be terrorism and what other democracies like the UK, US do. But Indian **anti-terror measures** were inspired by legislation from these countries and United Nations Security Council resolutions.

TADA and POTA were known for their **lengthy pretrial detention, in-custody torture, false prosecutions, and forced confessions**. Minority community members paid a heavy price.

What has been the stand of SC on anti-terror legislations?

The Supreme Court had evolved many safeguards for application of TADA and POTA.

In **Shaheen Welfare Association v Union of India, 1996**; it categorized TADA detainees into four different brackets to grant bail.

In **Kartar Singh v State of Punjab, 1994**; SC ordered setting up state and central review committees to prevent the misuse of TADA.

But in the UAPA era, the court has been unable to **provide adequate safeguards** against **arbitrary arrests, malicious prosecutions and long pretrial detentions**. The Court's ruling in **NIA v Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali (2020)** has made the grant of bail almost impossible.

What are issues related to UAPA?

Terms like “**terrorist act**”, “**unlawful activity**”, “**advocacy**”, “**conspiracy**”, “**likely to threaten**”, and “**likely to strike terror**” have been **framed vaguely**. These seem to give agencies arbitrary powers.

There is a lack of **standards for prosecution**. Instead, the act allows for a blind reliance on police cases. The terms like “terrorist act” are subjective and difficult to define.

UAPA has one of the worst records for prosecution success. According to a **PUCL report** in 2022, less than 3% of arrests made under the UAPA resulted in convictions between 2015 and 2020. Only 1,080 of the 4,690 people detained under the UAPA between 2018 and 2020 received bail.

What is the way forward for reforming UAPA?

The debate on UAPA needs to be taken **beyond the validity of a few select provisions**. The law's **purpose and scope** need careful examination. The main question is **proportionality** which is a **fundamental principle of our Constitution**.

The Court must determine whether the **breadth and consequences of UAPA** are substantially out of proportion to its declared goals.

There is a need to have a law that **effectively combat terrorism** and still conform to the **imperatives of our Constitution**. The ability to identify, neutralize, and bring terrorists to justice should be a priority.

However, the authorities must be subject to **stringent, clear controls and impartial oversight**.

76. Billionaire Raj: The rise of India's multi-business conglomerates

Source– The post is based on the article “**Billionaire Raj: The rise of India's multi-business conglomerates**” published in the **Business Standard** on **18th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance: Wealth concentration

News- Recently, two announcements of the past few days grabbed attention. One was Tata-owned Air India's eye-popping order for 470 passenger planes. The second announcement was an investment commitment of about Rs 3.5 trillion by various business houses

How is the business being dominated by a few large firms in India?

Gautam Adani's companies run some of India's biggest ports, operate a **fifth of its power transmission lines, and accommodate a quarter of its commercial air traffic**.

Tata group's chairman recently mentioned investment plans totalling **\$90 billion for the next five years**.

Mukesh Ambani has made various pronouncements for **investments of about Rs 10 trillion**. His ambitions include producing a **fifth of the country's renewable energy**.

The **Rs 30-trillion investment** mentioned by just the Big Three equals a tenth of India's GDP. They account for 20% of the net profits of 3,250 out of India's listed, non-financial companies.

What can be concluded by increasing wealth concentrations in the hands of a few conglomerates?

The increasing concentration of mega investments is because of their **capital-intensive nature and the scale of the country's ambitions**.

The rise of **multi-business conglomerates** stands in contrast to the earlier rise of **focused, single-business enterprises** in telecom, IT services, pharmaceuticals, and automobiles.

The experience of South Korea, Japan, and Russia has shown, the **conglomerate model** often comes with political **connections**. But such comparisons can be overblown.

The six big groups have revenue equal to about 11% of India's GDP. Samsung alone accounts for more than that in South Korea.

77. Social security and the story of two Budgets

Source– The post is based on the article “**Social security and the story of two Budgets**” published in **The Hindu** on **18th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government schemes and interventions

Relevance: Socio-economic Welfare of vulnerable section

News- In Union Budget 2023-24, the finance minister asserted that since 2014, the central government has ensured a better quality of life, and a life of dignity for all its citizens. But Budget figures help distinguish rhetoric from the truth.

What are the issues with social security provisions provided by the central government?

Budgetary provisions– There have been severe cuts in various **social security and welfare schemes** such as food security and the MGNREGA in the budget.

Elderly and other social security pensioners are not given enough consideration.

Budget for the NSAP has remained constant, at approximately **₹9,000 crore**. It is steadily reducing in real terms. This year, the NSAP saw a reduction of ₹16 crore.

Low amount of pension-Failure to **index social sector expenditure to inflation** has led to the even greater marginalisation of vulnerable people. India's cumulative inflation rate from 2007 to 2023 is 193.19%. This means that ₹200 in 2007 would have become ₹586.38 in 2023 if indexed.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

Since 2007, social security pensions under the National Social Assistance Programme have remained frozen at a low of ₹200 for the elderly and ₹300 per month for widows and persons with disabilities.

Numbers receiving pensions– For selecting beneficiaries, the central government relies on the obsolete **Below Poverty Line lists based on Census 2001**.

78. land degradation: Saving the land for better use

Source: The post is based on the article “**Saving the land for better use**” published in **Business Standard** on **20th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation.

Relevance: About land degradation in India.

News: “Arresting land degradation” was included among the top priorities by the G20 Working Group on Environment and Climate Sustainability. In India, the economic loss due to land degradation and changes in land use patterns was estimated in 2014-15 at Rs 3.17 trillion, equivalent to 2.5% of that year’s gross domestic product.

What is the present state of land degradation in India?

Land degradation in States: Rajasthan is the most land degradation-prone state. This is followed by Maharashtra and Gujarat. No state is, actually, immune to land deterioration due to some factor or the other. The most rapid deterioration in land quality is in the biodiversity-rich and ecologically sensitive north-eastern region.

Low per-capita availability of land: Arresting land degradation is highly relevant for India as it has to support 18% of the world’s population on only 2.4% of the land.

The per capita availability of arable land has shrunk from 0.48 hectares in 1950 to merely 0.16 hectares now. This is much lower than the global average of 0.29 hectares.

Reduction in land quality: A sizeable segment of India’s land has already lost part of its productivity and carrying capacity due to mismanagement and indiscriminate anthropogenic activity. Thus denoting ill for the livelihood of a large number of farmers and forest-dwellers.

Read more: [Despite PM Modi’s assurance, land degradation, desertification increasing](#)

What are the major reasons for land degradation in India?

The major reasons are **a)** deforestation; **b)** wind and water erosion; **c)** imprudent alteration of land use; **d)** excessive pressure on land beyond its carrying capacity; and **e)** flawed farm practices such as imbalanced use of chemical fertilisers; inadequate application of organic manures; indiscriminate tillage; and mismanagement of many other kinds, **f)** India does not have a precise data on the amount of degraded land. For instance, the data on National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning, and the Space Application Centre (SAC) of the Indian Space Research Organisation vary vastly.

Read more: [Land degradation in India hurts farmers and forest dwellers the most](#)

How India has reclaimed the degraded land?

India is among the 123 countries that have committed themselves to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030.

According to a recent report issued by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, India has restored around 9.8 mha of degraded land between 2011 and 2018 — an average rate of reclamation of around 1.4 mha a year.

What should be done further to reclaim the degraded land?

The benefits of land restoration can be as high as 10 times the cost of reclamation and ill effects of land degradation, ranging from the drop in crop yields to the out-migration of the population. Hence, India should take steps **a)** to safeguard the physical, chemical, and biological health of the existing normal land, **b)** to invest in land improvement, and **c)** To evolve and meticulously enforce judicious land use policy based on the capability classification of land.

79. [India as a developed country: Developed by 2047? Yes](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Developed by 2047? Yes: If India’s per capita income in constant PPP dollars grows 4.1% annually, a very realistic prospect, it will be in the advanced economies club in a quarter of a century”** published in **The Times of India** on **20th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- India economy and growth

Relevance: Future prospects of Indian economy

News: PM Modi, in his 2022 Independence Day speech, announced the goal for India in 2047. It will get the status of a developed country.

What is the per capita income level in India?

It measures the **average income earned per person** in a given area in a specified year. It is calculated by dividing the area’s total income by its total population.

It is **useful in evaluating people’s affordability and purchasing power**. Per capita income indicates whether certain commodities and facilities are out of reach by average people in terms of financial aspects.

India’s per capita income India’s per capita net national income or NNI was around **150 thousand rupees** in the financial year 2022. In contrast, the gross national income at constant prices stood at over 146 trillion rupees.

What are ways that can help India to improve its per capita income?

-Increasing **income for farmers**.

-Through **government expenditure and investment** in infrastructure.

-**Urbanizing** India’s rural populations.

-Becoming **competitive in high-potential sectors**.

Can India get the status of a Developed nation by 2047?

India’s **start-up ecosystem is the third largest** in the world after the US and China. Several prominent start-ups such as Ola, BYJU’S, Zerodha, Cred, Razorpay, and more have their head offices in the city which is often called the ‘Silicon Valley of India.’

Innovation will be key in transforming India’s economy. Its progress in the **Global Innovation Index 2022 from the 81st spot in 2015 to the 40th** now is a good indicator of the road ahead.

What should be India’s focus areas going forward?

As per **‘UN State of World Population Report 2022’** in 2023 India will dethrone China, as the world’s most populous country.

A **hungry nation** cannot be a developed country. As per the latest **Global Hunger Index (2022)** is ranked **107th among 121 countries**.

As per the **World Inequality Report 2022**, India is among the most-inequitable countries globally. It has the bottom half of the population earning Rs 53,610, but the top 10 percent earning 20 times at Rs 11,66,520.

80. [Budget and the growth process](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Budget and the growth process”** published in **Business Standard** on **21st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Budgeting

Relevance: issues with the Budget 2023-24

News: The article discusses the shortcomings of Budget 2023-24.

What are the shortcomings of the Budget 2023-24?

Expenditure: The Budget Estimates (BE) of expenditure for 2023-24 show an increase of Rs 3.16 trillion over the Revised Estimates (RE) for 2022-23.

The increase in interest payments and the increase in loans and grants to states account for 76 percent of the expenditure.

Subsidies: A major reduction in expenditure has happened in subsidies. This has resulted in the sharp drop in the provision for food, fertilizer, and LPG subsidies.

The budget has increased in the outlays for SC and ST welfare, youth welfare, and the gender budget. These taken together form a 9.2 percent increase but it is below the capital outlay.

The budget has also decreased the outlay for rural employment guarantee programme which was the need for the inclusive development.

Capital outlay: The Budget shows the capital outlay as Rs 10 trillion.

However, if the equity contribution to public enterprises and grants and loans to states are excluded, the capital expenditure from the Budget would be lower by about Rs 2 trillion.

Further, if one includes the capital expenditure of central public enterprises, the total would be about Rs 11.5 trillion. This is about Rs 2 trillion more than the RE for FY23.

This gives a growth rate of about 20 percent rather than the 33 percent stated in the Budget papers.

Moreover, most of the capital outlay is on the transport sector with special focus on the railways.

The Budget presents a 50 percent increase in the capital outlay on the Railways.

However, when we combine the Budget outlay and extra-budgetary resources (EBR) from public enterprises for railway development, the increase is 6 percent not 50 percent.

Household Savings and Private Investments: Capital outlay is largely funded by public borrowing which depends on net household financial savings. The increase in the public capital outlay has been one of the reasons behind low private investments.

Further, the post-liberalisation budgets of the Centre and the states have not created sufficient space for the flow of funds to the private sector.

This is because of the very slow growth in the tax/GDP ratio and the continuing rise in the public expenditure/GDP ratio.

Even though there has been a five-fold increase in real GDP between 1992-93 and 2019-20, the gap between the expenditure of the Centre and the states and the tax revenue of the Centre and the states remained around 14 percent of GDP.

This year's Budget also does not show a sufficient reduction in the draft of the central and state governments on household savings.

Hence, private savings and the stimulation of the credit market for private investment must become a major target for fiscal policy.

81. How Union budget 2023 may foster greater violations of privacy

Source- The post is based on the article “How Union budget 2023 may foster greater violations of privacy” published in **The Indian Express** on 21th February 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance: Privacy related issues

News- The article emphasis the need for robust data protection law.

What are provisions in the budget related to digitisation?

The 2023 Union Budget promises to be a landmark year for technology and digitisation in India.

The **Digital India Programme** has been allotted Rs 4,795.24 crore

There is a **1,000 per cent increase** in the funding for the **Artificial Intelligence and Digital Intelligence** Unit.

What are the potential risks associated with Digitisation?

Digitisation entails ever-expanding data collection, storage and sharing. This includes personal information such as **biometrics and financial and health data**.

Many of the initiatives announced with the budget reinforce the deep discord between the pace of digitisation efforts which will aggravate the existing privacy deficit in India.

What is current digital privacy protection legal concern?

Current **anonymisation** techniques are inadequate and do not guarantee privacy protection.

The **Current Draft of Digital Data Protection Bill 2022** falls short and **fails to incorporate safeguards**.

This Draft 2022 is even weaker than Draft 2021.

The 2021 draft imposed a penalty for the intentional reidentification of an individual's anonymised personal information. This provision has been done away with, amplifying concerns around insufficient limitations and safeguards for privacy.

What is the next initiative of the government?

A National Data Governance Policy will be brought out to enable access to anonymised data (Union Budget 2023–24)

Anonymised data includes data that does not contain Personally Identifiable Information (PII) like **name, age, phone number, address**, etc, or data from which PII has been removed.

What is the way forward?

The World Economic Forum's Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2023 finds that data privacy and cybersecurity regulations are effective for reducing cyber risks.

So for the potential of anonymised data to be unleashed without **jeopardising people's privacy**, India first needs a robust data protection law.

As the country starts its **G20 presidency** and prepares to be a leader in this space, we should do well to prioritise the development of exemplary, rights-respecting privacy and cybersecurity regimes.

82. Reducing Army presence in J&K hinterland: A thaw in the Valley

Source: The post is based on the article **"Reducing Army presence in J&K hinterland: A thaw in the Valley"** published in **Business Standard** on **21st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Security challenges and their management in border areas.

Relevance: About withdrawing soldiers from J&K.

News: Discussion has begun on reducing the presence of Army troops in civilian areas in the hinterland of Jammu and Kashmir.

What are the reasons for withdrawing soldiers from J&K?

Excluding paramilitaries, the number of Army soldiers in J&K is said to be in the region of 1.7 lakhs. This includes the soldiers posted along the 740-km Line of Control with Pakistan.

The reason for withdrawing soldiers are **a)** a big reduction in the number of terrorist incidents, **b)** stationing soldiers indefinitely to keep a check on civilians is not good for the Army or for the people and **c)** the February 2021 recommitment by the Indian and Pakistan armies to the LoC ceasefire.

It has been proposed that the CRPF can fill in for the Army.

What are the benefits of withdrawing soldiers from J&K?

In the year of India's G20 presidency, **a)** The move could help India to counter international description of Kashmir as the "world's most militarised region", **b)** India can focus on the Line of Actual Control. Earlier, Rashtriya Rifles, a force raised by the Army specially for counter-insurgency duties in Kashmir was deployed in LAC.

What should be done along with withdrawing soldiers from J&K?

The security situation in J&K is far from resolved. A good start for **troop thinning would be in areas with low violence levels**.

The **J&K police must put in place a regular crime control mechanism** with an emphasis on investigations, which may have a salutary effect against terrorist activity.

The ultimate goal in **J&K is political empowerment**, and for this, the government must make plans to **hold assembly elections** at the earliest.

83. [Be Africa, Not Las Vegas – The message from Himalayan belt is clear: India needs to nurture back wild nature in some parts, and stop the construction mania](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Save Himalayas: Number of pilgrims and tourists in stressed areas must be capped. Globally, this is the accepted norm**” and “**Be Africa, Not Las Vegas – The message from Himalayan belt is clear: India needs to nurture back wild nature in some parts, and stop the construction mania**” published in **The Times of India** on **21st February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment and Biodiversity Conservation.

Relevance: About protecting the Himalayan ecosystem.

News: Recently, there are large cracks appearing on the Badrinath highway. From Joshimath, to the river city of Karanprayag, to the eastern edges of Himachal, the disturbing shifts and slides of the ground pose big questions for the protection of the Himalayan ecosystem.

What is the present state of ecological damage in India?

The past century has seen the disappearance of almost a third of the country's forest cover; many tree, plant and insect species are extinct or headed in that direction.

Millions of hectares of grassland and sanctuaries are encroached upon by either the local population or excessive tourism and commerce. For example, Mumbai's mangroves and Deodar forests all across Himachal was destroyed for making roads and apartment blocks respectively. Moreover, forests are cleared regularly for industrial parks, mining, commercial plantations and grazing. Further, the tree cover of 10 million hectares is destroyed every year.

There is no institutional policy or active manpower push to contain the destruction and reverse ecological damage.

The damage inflicted is so pervasive and complete, in many cases, it is irreversible and may take many decades to repair.

What are the major reasons for ecological damage in India?

This is due to two environmentally destructive strategies, **excess and instant gratification**. For example, the fragile ecology of the Garhwal Himalayas is under tremendous stress due to **a)** Hydroelectric projects, increased traffic and construction activities which led to a breach in the carrying capacity of the Uttarakhand hills, **b)** Constructing a four-lane highway in the Himalayan region. Though four-lane highways seem like a major advance, such a development strategy is neither economically sound nor ecologically tenable.

Read more: [Joshimath Crisis: Causes and Solutions – Explained, pointwise](#)

How do other countries conserve ecology?

Bhutan's 'high value, low volume' tourism strategy: The country charges foreign tourists a **sustainable development fee** of around \$200 per person per night. Indian visitors also have to pay Rs 1,200 per day.

Central and South American countries:

a) Costa Rica's Blue Flag Ecology Programme: The country accounts for 4% of the world's biodiversity and relies on tourism for 10.3% of its GDP. A strict set of environmental criteria is laid down under the programme. Under it, all local stakeholders in the tourism industry work together to attain the coveted Blue Flag tag.

b) Chile: The tourism industry is allowed to operate only in sustainable ways within protected areas. Tourism stakeholders are then held accountable for any breaches in these agreements.

Must read: [Land subsidence: PMO reviews situation in 'sinking' Joshimath town](#)

What should be done to protect the Himalayan ecosystem?

Cap pilgrimage count: Many countries around the globe **cap pilgrim and tourist numbers**. Uttarakhand's Chamoli district administration has indicated there may be a cap on pilgrims. The government should implement this without hesitation.

Greening of the denuded sections of the landscape: This includes replanting along with multiple ecological plans to encourage bees, butterflies and birds, besides a wider variety of regional plants and trees.

Focus on all species: A calibrated study of varied animal and insect species is required to create a balanced ecosystem within forests.

In forest and rural areas, hyenas, wild hens, boar, foxes, deer, wolves and other animal species need to be nurtured; they have been grossly neglected, due to excessive focus on tigers, lions and cheetahs.

Promote deliberate underdevelopment in ecologically-sensitive regions: The rewilding of India must be closely tied to de-populating certain overburdened areas of the country. But that should be accompanied by a clear policy on areas available for tourism, limited tourism, and no-go areas.

Find middle ground: India, wild like remote Africa, or India overbuilt like Las Vegas, it will take some serious steps to find a middle ground.

84. [UPI promotion should not eclipse our e-rupee](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “UPI promotion should not eclipse our e-rupee” published in **Live Mint** on **22nd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources.

Relevance: About e-rupee and UPI.

News: Recently, India’s Unified Payments Interface (UPI) was linked to Singapore’s version PayNow.

What are the benefits of the recent linking?

The link will **a)** Ease bank-to-bank fund transfers between Singapore and India, **b)** Facilitate commerce, **c)** A special boon for people of Indian origin abroad in need of a quick way to send money to India or receive remittances, and **d)** The transaction cost will be less than other legal channels.

About India’s digital rupee

Read here: [RBI unveils features of digital rupee, plans to launch pilot soon](#)

About India’s UPI

Read here: [Unified Payments Interface \(UPI\)?](#)

How UPI is linked to global payment systems?

UPI’s international subsidiary has been active in taking UPI mechanism global by forging foreign ties. It has pacts with European payment facilitator Worldline, the UK’s PayXpert, the UAE’s Neopay and France’s Lyra Network for UPI-compatible transfers. Some UPI payments can also be made in Nepal, Bhutan and Malaysia.

How successful is UPI in India?

UPI’s open architecture has got as many as 385 banks enrolled with more than 8 billion transactions logged this January worth nearly ₹13 trillion. This is up sharply from 4.6 billion worth ₹8.3 trillion in the first month of 2022.

Note: Only 2.4 crore of the retail digital rupee has been issued by RBI till 20 January. The wholesale CBDC has had only modest issuance of around ₹115.9 crore.

Must read: [UPI and Digital Payments in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to promote e-rupee?

UPI is currently part of India’s G20 showcase, but CBDC must not get eclipsed in the promotion. To avoid such issues the government must **provide public clarity on the e-rupee’s role**.

Banks used to promote bank-mediated transfers. But, e-rupee has sovereign backing. Unlike money held in an account whose safety depends on the particular bank’s solvency. Hence, CBDC

holdings are safer. So, the RBI should look to **secure the retail spaces of the Indian economy from potential bank-crisis** contagion by averting over-reliance on UPI.

Read more: [Popularize the e-rupee even at the cost of UPI](#)

85. [UPI: Local & global](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “UPI: Local & global” published in **Business Standard** on **23rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources.

Relevance: About e-rupee and UPI.

News: Recently, India’s Unified Payments Interface (UPI) was linked to Singapore’s version PayNow.

About the linking of India’s UPI and PayNow

Read here: [India’s UPI and Singapore’s PayNow are now integrated: What it means, who benefits](#)

It will enable users to send funds via a UPI ID, mobile number, or virtual payment address via Singapore PayNow up to a limit of Rs 60,000 a day.

The transfer agents will be limited to a handful of Indian banks — State Bank of India, Indian Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, and ICICI Bank — that can enable transactions via their banking facilities or mobile apps.

The UPI is truly inclusive since it could bring within its ambit the thousands of workers who have to rely on relatively slow online money transfers via service providers who charge fairly steep fees.

Note: *Third-party app providers — such as PhonePe, Google Pay, or Paytm — remain outside the purview of this international link. But, these big three account for more than 90% of transactions both in terms of number and value. Hence, in future the link might extend to them.*

About the success of UPI

By 2021, five years after it was introduced as a bank-to-bank pilot project in April 2016, the UPI has become the **world’s fifth-largest payment network by volume**, behind Visa, Alipay, WeChat Pay, and Mastercard. The major advantages of the system are,

a) The ubiquity of UPI across incomes and geographies of India, **b)** UPI’s acceptance has encouraged greater financial inclusion at low cost, **c)** UPI has gained credibility and traction in India to the extent to achieve digital economy, and **d)** UPI’s simple and secure architecture has reduced the level of vulnerability in the system.

What should be done to improve UPI’s interface?

According to RBI data, Singapore’s share of inward remittances is just 5.7%. The real value and test of UPI will happen if their scope were extended to the Gulf countries, or the US and Canada, which dominate the inward-remittance geographies.

The exponential expansion of the UPI system has been accompanied by a rise in frauds, though they occur mostly on account of user ignorance rather than hacks. These should be addressed immediately.

Read more: [UPI promotion should not eclipse our e-rupee](#) and [Popularize the e-rupee even at the cost of UPI](#)

86. [A clean gamble: On carbon trading](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “A clean gamble: On carbon trading” published in **Live Mint** on **23rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation.

Relevance: About carbon markets.

News: The Centre is expected to clarify the specifics of a carbon trading market in India.

What does the term carbon trading mean?

A decade ago, they meant stock-market-like exchanges that traded in 'carbon offsets' which is mentioned under the Clean Development Mechanism.

But now, industrial projects in developing countries that avoided greenhouse gas emissions were eligible for credits. After verification, these credits could be sold to European companies that could buy them in lieu of cutting emissions themselves.

The objective of carbon markets is to incentivise investments in renewable energy sources. The carbon trading mechanism will mobilise domestic finance and accelerate the shift away from fossil fuels. Thus, carbon trading can meaningfully lead to emissions reductions.

Must Read: [Explained | What are carbon markets and how do they operate?](#)

What are the initiatives that facilitate carbon trading?

Earlier, the approval by the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change via the Paris and Glasgow agreements** ensured that carbon markets have acquired greater global significance.

The **EU-Emissions Trading Systems (ETS)** is a government-mandated emission limit on industrial sectors such as aluminium or steel plants that require industries to either cut emissions or buy government-certified permits from companies that cut more emissions than required or were auctioned by governments. Carbon credits became valuable because they could be used as permits in EU-ETS exchanges.

The European Union also runs the oldest **emission trading scheme** since 2005, had cut emissions by 35% from 2005-2019 and 9% in 2009, over the previous years.

Domestically, **a)** an amendment to the [Energy Conservation Act](#) was passed in 2022, **b)** a similar trading mechanism is implemented in **Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme**. There are around 1,000 industries have been involved in procuring and trading energy-saving certificates (ESCs). Since 2015, various cycles of the PAT have shown emission reductions of around 3%-5%.

What are the challenges with Carbon trading?

a) Though Carbon credits are tradeable on an exchange, like shares, these are trading permits which **permit the 'right to pollute'**, **b)** They are expected to **fluctuate in value depending on a company's need** to balance profitability and comply with pollution norms.

Must read: [Carbon Markets: Benefits and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to encourage carbon trading in India?

Clear definition: 'Carbon markets' is not a specific term. So, it needs clarity in the Indian context.

The government **must intervene** to bring **pressure on the industry to participate in the market** and also **ignore proven non-market initiatives** to achieve greenhouse gas reductions.

[87. India can become a biodiversity champion](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"India can become a biodiversity champion"** published in **The Hindu** on **23rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance: Biodiversity conservation

News- Biodiversity is essential to the future of this planet. The importance of our planet's biodiversity was strongly articulated at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Montreal.

What was the important development during the biodiversity conference in Montreal?

There was an agreement to **"halt and reverse" biodiversity loss** by conserving 30% of the world's land and 30% of the world's oceans by 2030, known as the **30×30 pledge**.

What are different programmes launched by the Indian government for preserving biodiversity?

Union Budget 2023 mentioned **"Green Growth"** as one of the seven priorities.

The National Mission for a Green India aims to increase forest cover on degraded lands and

protect existing forested lands.

The **Green Credit Programme** has the objective to incentivize **environmentally sustainable and responsive** actions by companies, individuals and local bodies.

The **Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI)** is particularly significant because of the extraordinary importance of mangroves and coastal ecosystems in mitigating climate change.

The **Prime Minister Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment, and Amelioration of Mother Earth (PM-PRANAM)** for reducing inputs of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides is critical for sustaining our agriculture.

The **Amrit Dharohar scheme** is expected to encourage optimal use of wetlands, and enhance biodiversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.

What is the way forward for successful implementation of these programmes?

It is critical that these programmes should focus on current state of the country's biodiversity with evidence based implementation. A **science -based and inclusive monitoring** of the programme is important.

New missions and programmes should effectively use **modern concepts of sustainability**. The focus should be on **valuation of ecosystems that consider ecological, cultural, and sociological aspects** of our biological wealth.

There is a need to sustain ecological flows through reduction in water use in key sectors such as agriculture. This can be done by encouraging changes to **less water intensive crops** such as millets and **investments in water recycling** in urban areas.

For the Green India Mission, implementation should focus on **ecological restoration** rather than tree plantation. There is a need to choose sites where it can contribute to **ecological connectivity** in landscapes fragmented by **linear infrastructure**.

Furthermore, choice of species and density should be informed by **available knowledge and evidence on resilience** under emerging climate change.

Site selection should also be carefully considered for the mangrove initiative. There is need for greater emphasis on **diversity of mangrove species** with retention of the **integrity of coastal mud flats and salt pans**.

Each of these efforts must be **inclusive of local and nomadic communities** where these initiatives will be implemented. **Traditional Knowledge and practices** of these communities should be integrated into the implementation plans.

Each programme should include significant **educational and research funding** to bring awareness to India's biological wealth.

The **National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well Being** should be immediately launched by the government. This mission seeks to harness the power of **interdisciplinary knowledge** for greening India and its economy.

88. The difficulty with renewables

Source– The post is based on the article “The difficulty with renewables” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Energy

Relevance: Renewable energy and related issues

News- The target of having 500 GW of non-fossil generating capacity by 2030 may look impressive. But, it may prove to be elusive unless we can enhance our storage capacity.

Why is storage not a prominent challenge for the energy sector in current times?

India has more than **200 GW of coal-based capacity**. The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission recognises **55% as the technical minimum**. It means that a 1,000 MW plant can run at 550 MW.

The additional operating cost for running the plant at 55% capacity is allowed by the CERC as legitimate expenditure.

Why is there a need for a focus on storage capacity in the future?

When India's renewable capacity goes up further, some of the coal-based units would generate at the **technical minimum** and the extra renewable energy would be used to charge the batteries.

This stored energy could be used to supply electricity during the **non-solar hours**, especially when the coal-based generating units would be phased out gradually.

Some **minimum coal-based generation** would be required for meeting a part of the **base load**.

What are storage options for India and hurdles faced by storage options?

These options are **hydrogen-based storage, lithium-ion batteries and pump storage plants**. Hydrogen storage is feasible for **long-term storage**. One can use this stored energy, for example, in situations when coal mining goes down or when hydro generation depletes due to low reservoir levels.

For day-to-day storage, batteries are still the ideal source. Though the **cost of batteries** has declined by about 80% over the last decade, it is still quite expensive. Moreover, the pace of decline in the cost of batteries has reached a plateau.

Pump storage plants, India has a total capacity of about 4.7 GW but only 3.3 GW is functional. A survey of the CEA estimated a pump storage **potential of about 100 GW**.

Pump storage plants have not really grown in India due to several factors, including **high investment costs, long gestation periods, non-remunerative pricing models and lack of adequate sites** having the topography that is required for operating a pump storage plant.

What will be other challenges for the renewable energy sector in India?

The **financial condition of our distribution companies** will be another hindrance. The additional solar and wind capacity has to come from the private sector.

No developer will invest unless there is some **credible payment security mechanism**.

Problems with **land acquisition, and securing the right of way for laying down transmission lines** will also continue to hinder progress.

89. India must update its security strategy and shed obsession with Pakistan

Source- The post is based on the article **"India must update its security strategy and shed obsession with Pakistan"** published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance: National security framework of India

News- The article explains the need for national security strategy for the 21st century.

What are issues with India's national security?

India is lacking a concrete **national security strategy**.

India has created the **National Security Council** to write a National Security Strategy but it was never held accountable for not producing one.

India has a **land-centric defence budget**. The Navy and Air Force are underfunded.

What is the way forward to improve the national security of India?

India has rightly created a CDS and an integrated staff. If NSC is unable to write a National Security Strategy, the Integrated Staff can write the **theaterisation plan and a National Military Strategy**.

In this 21st century, both **theaterisation and the geographical difficulties** in the Himalayas. There is a need for **grand maritime strategy**.

Pakistan has been successful in an asymmetric **warfare game** with India for half a century. But the **over-extension of resources** has now led to its collapse. India should not be overly concerned about Pakistan India's strategic thinking should come out of the 20th century and face the **new century with fresh minds**.

90. [India at a crossroads: Reduce the risks of economic concentration](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India at a crossroads: Reduce the risks of economic concentration**” published in **Live Mint** on **23rd February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: protectionists policies adopted by India

News: Many policies have been implemented by the government to make India one of the most important countries in the world. However, those policies also have concerns.

How have policies helped India?

The government has implemented various policies that have modernized India and supported its growth.

A massive investment has been made in the single market and in infrastructure including digital infrastructure. These investments with industrial policies and a growing digital based welfare system have led to **robust economic performance**.

Furthermore, India’s military and geopolitical importance will only grow, and its cultural diversity will generate soft power to rival the US and the UK.

However, there are also concerns with these policies.

What are the concerns with these developmental policies?

These policies have made India an economy where **large private corporations/conglomerates control a significant part of the economy**.

These conglomerates have helped the economy to grow despite lower investment rates. But, the problem with these conglomerates is that they have been able to influence policymaking to benefit themselves.

This has in turn led to two problems – **a)** it has become a hurdle to the growth of early-stage startups and domestic entrants in key industries, **b)** it is changing the government’s ‘Make in India’ programme into a counterproductive, protectionist scheme.

What issues are associated with the development of conglomerates?

If any loopholes found in these big industries (e.g., Adani Group), it hurts India’s image globally. It has implications for India’s institutional robustness and global investors’ perceptions of India. The **Asian financial crisis of the 1990s** demonstrated that the partial capture of economic policy by capitalist conglomerates will hurt productivity growth by hampering competition, inhibiting creative destruction and increasing inequality.

Hence, India’s long-term success ultimately depends on whether it can foster and sustain a growth model that is competitive, dynamic, sustainable, inclusive and fair.

What are the problems with the Make in India scheme?

Make in India was intended to strengthen the Indian economy by increasing the domestic production of goods for exports.

However, **India is promoting domestic products** in Indian markets through Make in India and **adopting protectionist import-substitution policies**.

This gives advantages to domestic industries and conglomerates from global competition.

Moreover, **India’s tariff policies** are preventing it from becoming more competitive in goods export and it has also resisted joining regional trade agreements.

This ultimately affects the objective of Make in India which was intended to increase trade exports.

Another problem with Make in India is that it has evolved to support production in labour-intensive industries such as cars, tractors, locomotives, etc.

However, India should be focusing on industries where it has a comparative advantage, such as tech and IT, artificial intelligence, business services and fintech.

Hence, for reaping the benefits of Make in India, policymakers should focus on these dynamic sectors by establishing special economic zones. Else, Make in India will continue to produce suboptimal results.

91. [India's R&D estimates are an incomplete picture](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's R&D estimates are an incomplete picture**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance: Issues related to R&D in India

News- India's research and development expenditure -GDP ratio of 0.7% is very low when compared to major economies. It is much below the world average of 1.8%.

What is the reason for low spending on R&D in India?

The main reason is the **low investment in R&D by the corporate sector**. While the corporate sector accounts for about two thirds of gross domestic expenditure on R&D in leading economies, its share in India is just 37%.

What are issues with GERD statistics in India?

Evidence suggests that India's GERD data are an underestimate.

A 2022 report of the **National Science Foundation of the United States** on Foreign R&D by U.S.-based MNCs shows a spending of **₹649.7 on R&D** in India in 2018.

But the DST has provided an estimate of **₹60.9 billion R&D** spending in 2017--18 by foreign MNCs. It is only about 10% of what U.S. firms have reported to have spent in India on R&D.

Why are GERD statistics underestimated in India?

The **National Science and Technology Management Information System (NSTMIS)** of the DST is the agency that compiles GERD statistics in India.

It is easier to gather the information on R&D by the government sector, the higher education sector and public sector enterprises.

The challenge lies in collecting data from the private corporate sector. The method used for identification of R&D performing firms does not capture all the R&D performing firms.

The NSTMIS relies on the **Department of Scientific and Industrial Research list of recognised R&D units** and the **database of the CMIE for this purpose**.

The DSIR list may not have many of the actual R&D performers for two reasons:

1. Firms which consider **government incentives** as not attractive enough may register themselves with the DSIR.
2. It may be difficult for R&D firms in services such as software and R&D services to meet the **requirement of having separate infrastructure for R&D** to distinguish it from their usual business.

A study at the **Institute for Studies in Industrial Development** found that **only 11% of firms** receiving foreign investment for R&D purposes had been registered with DSIR. The CMIE database covers **only 3.5% of the currently active registered enterprises** in India.

The survey conducted by the NSTMIS is the key source of R&D statistics of India. For those firms which do not respond to the survey, the data is collected from **secondary sources** such as **annual reports and CMIE**. This method will work only if firms **disclose their R&D spending**. A review of the documents submitted to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs shows that there are firms which do not report any spending on R&D. But, **their declarations** suggest that they are engaged in activities of technology development.

What is the way forward to improve GERD statistics?

In the short term, NSTMIS should use the **patents granted data**, both in India and the U.S. in addition to its current method to identify R&D performing enterprises.

R&D statistics should not be confined to the responses to the surveys. Instead, annual R&D estimates can be prepared from **mandatory disclosures by enterprises** to MCA.

In order to ensure **compliance and proper reporting**, technologies can be used like in the case of revamped income tax return forms where various sections are interlinked.

Proper disclosure of information to regulatory agencies, including R&D spending data, should be made an essential component of the **environmental, social and governance ranking of enterprises**.

92. [A case that scans the working of the anti-defection law](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A case that scans the working of the anti-defection law**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Parliament

Relevance: Issues related to political defections

News- SC of India is presently hearing a set of cases related to political events in Maharashtra last year, when a breakaway faction of Shiv Sena formed government.

What are some facts related to anti- defection laws?

The anti-defection law was introduced into the Constitution via the **Tenth Schedule in 1985**. Its purpose was to check increasingly frequent **floor crossing**; lured by money, ministerial berths, threats.

The Tenth Schedule stipulates that if any legislator voted against the party whip, he or she would be **disqualified from the house**.

While on the one hand this **empowered party leadership** against the legislative backbench, and weakened the **prospect of intra-party dissent**.

How has the 10th schedule worked in recent times?

The working of the Tenth Schedule has been patchy. In the last few years, there have been innumerable instances of **mid-term toppling of government** after a set of the ruling party or coalition’s own members turn against it.

This is **power politics** and not the expression of **intra-party dissent**. It is evident from the well-documented rise of “**resort politics**”.

Indeed, politicians have adopted **various strategies** to avoid the provisions of anti-defection law. Recent examples involve mass resignations instead of defections to force a fresh election. There have been **partisan actions** by State Governors with respect to swearing in ceremonies and the timing of floor tests, and equally partisan actions by Speakers in refusing to decide disqualification petitions.

Why does the role of the Supreme Court become crucial in such cases?

Such cases place the Court in a difficult position.

The court has to adjudicate the actions of a number of **constitutional functionaries**: Governors, Speakers, legislative party leaders, elected representatives.

But the Court does not have the **liberty of presuming dishonesty**. It must maintain an institutional arm’s length from the political actors, and adjudicate according to legalities.

Why the role of SC in case of 10th schedule being questioned?

In recent years the Supreme Court has given **multiple substantive judgments on anti-defection**. But, the toppling of governments remains as frequent as ever.

Politicians find **loopholes in Supreme Court judgments** and Tenth Schedule. But, Some of these loopholes were easily foreseeable at the time. They were not addressed by the Court.

93. [Can a centralized regulation help drug quality?](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Can a centralised regulation help drug quality?**” published in the **mint** on **24th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance: Regulatory system of drugs in India

News- The Central government is planning to centralise drug regulation.

What is the current regulatory landscape?

The **Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)** is the **apex regulatory body**. It is responsible for **approving new drugs, import of drugs and devices, clinical trials and laying down standards** for drugs.

Each state has its **own regulator** as well, which is often conjoined with the food and drug administration in the state. It looks after **licensing and auditing** manufacturing facilities, and **distribution and sale** of drugs.

They also grant licence for manufacturing drugs that have been around for 4 years or more.

What is the new proposal?

It is likely a step toward **centralization of drug regulation** in India. Currently, drugs older than four years can be registered in one state and sold in another.

The health ministry may be planning a **single centralized system** for the registration of all kinds of drugs, under the CDSCO.

Will it have a bearing on export quality?

It will not have much impact. Drugs sold in the global market are subject to **regulations of the buyer country**. The US and Europe deploy vast resources to make pharma adhere to their own standards.

Poorer countries such as Gambia often rely on a list of manufacturers and **inputs of the World Health Organization (WHO)**.

A centralized repository can aid in better monitoring.

Will it help improve drug quality?

Even if drug registration is **centralized**, the regulation for manufacturing will continue to be **decentralized**.

A plant is jointly inspected by the CDSCO and state regulators at the time of licensing of drugs, but **regular auditing** is usually done by state regulators.

Lower-level bureaucrats and inspecting officials need **capacity- raising and training**. India needs **greater accountability** at the manufacturer level to adhere to norms.

What else can be done to improve standards?

Along with tighter regulation of manufacturing, there is a need for a **national policy on recall of drugs**. If a drug is found to be substandard in one state and recalled by the regulator there, it is not necessarily recalled in other states.

It should be the **job of the national regulator** to ensure that a defective batch isn't sold in other markets.

Last, the track record of **prosecuting and penalizing** drug manufacturers for violating norms is poor in India. It needs improvement.

94. New delivery mechanisms for genetic therapy will do us good

Source- The post is based on the article **"New delivery mechanisms for genetic therapy will do us good"** published in the **mint** on **24th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of biotechnology

Relevance: Regulatory system of drugs in India

News- A biotech company called Aera Therapeutics has unveiled a type of protein nanoparticle that can be used to deliver all sorts of genetic medicines around the body.

What are the challenges associated with present genetic therapies?

The presently available **genetic therapy technologies** can only fix the genome in reachable parts of the body. **Its reach** is very limited. The liver, eyes and blood are the main places where cures might be possible.

These technologies largely rely on **viral vectors and lipid nanoparticles**. But they can only efficiently deliver to certain Zip codes. Lipid nanoparticles' routes are largely limited to the liver and eyes.

These have other limitations, for example how much cargo they can hold. Some genes for fixing the diseases are too big to fit inside a virus. It can be tough to **squeeze the instructions** for making Crispr tools into a usable lipid nanoparticle.

What are some facts associated with the new protein nanoparticle unveiled by Aera?

It is capitalizing on a recent discovery about a **class of human proteins** that are relics of viruses that infected humans ages ago.

One of these proteins assembled into a **protein shell of a virus particle** that stored the RNA needed for making more copies of itself.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology scientist Feng Zhang saw in the discovery an opportunity to exploit the system to **deliver genetic material** of his choice.

His lab experimented on the human genome for other proteins that assemble into **protective shells** and probed whether they were capable of **transferring RNA**.

In 2021, they showed that one of the proteins, called **PEG10** could be repurposed to deliver **gene-editing tools**. That work became the foundation for Aera.

So far, around 50 of these **self-assembling proteins** have been found. The protective shells these proteins form come in a range of sizes. It means that some might be better suited for slipping across the blood-brain barrier.

They are also, **in theory, adaptable**. Scientists have gotten very good at **engineering proteins** to do specific jobs. So, it is reasonable to think Aera researchers could engineer the capsids to travel to specific organs or tissues.

95. Safe across borders: On Unified Payments Interface-PayNow link

Source: This post is based on the article "Safe across borders", published in The Hindu on 24th feb. 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Money and Banking.

News: Recently, India and Singapore enabled faster transfer of remittances between both countries by enabling integration of Unified Payments Interface(UPI) with Singapore's PayNow.

[Read more](#)

The daily transaction limit is set at ₹60,000 or about SGD 1,000.

Significance of Cross-border integration of Payment Interfaces

3. It is the beginning of real-time cross-border person-to-person money transfers.
4. Singapore is home to a sizeable Indian diaspora as well as tens of thousands of migrant workers employed in Singapore.
5. It enables individuals to quickly and safely remit money. It will save them the hassle of running to bank branch or a wire transfer facility's outlet or costly hawala transactions.
6. It will eliminate the use of external settlement currency like US Dollar.
7. Singapore has already established payment settlement facility with Thailand in 2021. It is also the member of larger five-member initiative among the central banks of Southeast Asian economies, to connect their domestic digital payment systems. India could become a part of this initiative.
8. Besides boost to regional trade and tourism, such a network would help India to further formalise the flow of inbound remittances.

96. Disclosure gains – SEBI's Proposal on listing

Source: This post is based on the article "Disclosure gains", published in Business Standard on 24th Feb, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, India Economy – Financial Market

News: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed to tweak disclosure norms to improve transparency and streamline processes.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

Amendments are connected to various aspects of SEBI Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements, or ICDR Regulations 2018.

Aspects included:

- Underwriting public issues,
- The preconditions for announcing a bonus,
- The eligibility of pension funds to participate as anchor investors,
- Providing material documents and contracts for inspection in the case of a public issue.

What are the changes proposed?

Underwriters: First, presently, investors don't know, if appointment of underwriters is on a "soft" or "hard" basis. Soft basis means underwriter is only handling the technical rejections. Hard basis means underwriter will have to pick up a stake in the company, in case of under-subscription.

A hard commitment means underwriter has a stake and believes that the share price valuations are fair.

Proposed change: Any agreement with the underwriters regarding under-subscription and few related information should be mentioned in Red Herring Prospectus (RHP). It would give investors an idea of the underwriters' commitment and fair valuation.

Bonus Shares: Bonus issues involve capitalisation of reserves or profits. However, it is seen sometimes that companies have not fulfilled the conditions of issuing bonus shares. For example, the company may have outstanding employee stock options or convertible debentures.

Proposed change: company should be allowed to issue a bonus only if it has received in-principal approval for all prior issues, including employee stock options and convertible debentures/warrants.

Pension funds: pension funds that are associates of the lead manager (LM) or sponsored by an associate of the LM may not participate as anchor investors.

Proposed change: If a pension fund hold a minimum corpus of Rs 25 crore, it should be allowed to participate as anchor investor.

Reports: Presently, material documents and industry reports are available at the issuer's registered office only for a physical inspection.

Changes proposed: The papers should be available online, at the issuer's website.

97. [Slow path to peace in J&K](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**Slow path to peace in J&K**" published in **The Indian Express** on **25th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance: Security issues related to J&K

News- Union government is discussing a "proposal to withdraw the Indian Army completely from the Valley hinterland.

Why is the Union government considering the proposal to withdraw the Army from the Valley?

The **levels of violence in J&K** are decreasing since the August 5, 2019 decisions. It should lead to a reduction in the number of security forces deployed for internal security roles.

The Army is also **facing manpower pressures**. The two-year freeze on recruitment during Covid-19 has led to a shortage of around 1,20,000 soldiers. The enhanced deployment of troops along the LAC has exacerbated the problem.

Any reduction in internal security duties gives the Army an opportunity to **right-size its force** structure.

How should the proposal be implemented?

The manner of execution, in terms of timing and phasing, will be the key to success.

Timing– Assessing normalcy requires us to look at **external and internal factors** impacting the situation in J&K.

The **external factor** has been weakened. Pakistan's ability to support the terror activities today stands diminished. This is due to India's strong response to terrorist acts and **weak political, economic, and internal security scenario** in Pakistan.

The **internal factors** need to be addressed. These include bringing the security situation under control, tackling **radicalisation, meeting the aspirations of the people, bringing economic development, and resumption of political activity**.

The security situation today is **stable**. But, it would be prudent to take some more time to tackle the **underlying causes** comprehensively.

Phasing– Handing over areas to the CRPF should be done in a **phased manner**. The start could be made in the Jammu region. Here, the CRPF can take over the complete responsibility for **counter-terror operations**. A few RR units could be kept as a reserve for any contingency that may arise.

After the stabilisation of the CRPF deployment in the Jammu region, the second phase could be the handover of the Kashmir hinterland to the CRPF. Bulk of RR units can be disbanded, except for a few that could act as reserves.

However, handing over some districts in Kashmir on an **experimental basis** is not recommended. It would create problems of **operational integrity, intelligence collection, and command and control issues** with neighbouring forces operating under different ministries.

Phasing is being suggested for two primary reasons. Today, the Army, CRPF, and J&K police **work in synergy**.

The Army possess **highly trained soldiers, logistics, communication, engineering, and medical support**. In the absence of the Army, this capability void would need to be filled up.

The initial deployment of CRPF in the Jammu region could provide **valuable lessons** in this regard before they take up responsibility in the Kashmir valley.

The **phased deployment** would also ensure that the complete RR is not quickly disbanded. This is India's **most experienced counter-terrorism force for J&K**. It would be prudent to ensure that the situation is stabilised before we lose this capability.

98. Banga Message – On Appointment of Indians in

Source– The post is based on the article “Banga Message” published in **The Times of India** on **25th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: India and institute of global economic governance

News- Ajay Banga has been nominated as World Bank president.

What are the issues faced by WB (World Bank) and IMF(International Monetary Fund)?

WB and IMF is certainly in **dire need of reform**.

The US and EU have controlled the leadership of the two institutions. It does not reflect the **actual economic weight of their global membership**.

What is the significance of the Banga nomination for American Indians?

The nomination marks an important trend in India diaspora's performance. They have achieved **high- profile positions in the business world** in the US.

YouTube's Neal Mohan, Alphabet's Sundar Pichai, Microsoft's Satya Nadella and Novratis's Vasant Narasimhan are just some of the names in the CEO list .

Banga's nomination shows their **rising profile in US politics and governance**.

What are the lessons for India?

Banga's US citizenship was a prerequisite for the top WB job.

If India's **economic heft** grows, it will be successful in **pushing reforms at WB and IMF**. It will be able to nominate its own citizen for this.

Getting there needs to **create opportunities** like the US. Many more Indians should be able to rise to the top without travelling to America.

99. [Cyberattacks are rising, but there is an ideal patch](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Cyberattacks are rising, but there is an ideal patch**” published in **The Hindu** on **25th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Cyber Security

Relevance: increasing cyber threats in India and measures needed to prevent.

News: There has been an increase in Ransomware attacks in India. The attack on AIIMS and on the parent’s company of Solar Industries Limited are some of the examples.

These incidents highlight the need for mechanisms and laws that prevent such attacks.

What is Ransomware and what are threats from it?

Read Here: [What is a Ransomware?](#)

According to the data, over 75% of Indian organisations have faced such attacks.

Further, as India is moving towards digitisation, every critical infrastructure, from transportation, power and banking systems, would become extremely vulnerable to cyber-attacks.

There has also been misuses of the cyber capabilities in the **Ukraine war** like hacking and GPS jamming.

Hence, cyber security has emerged as a serious concern for nations including India and a comprehensive cyber security policy is the need of the hour.

What are some cyber security policies present in India?

Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In): It introduced a set of guidelines in 2022 that included the mandatory obligation to report cyber-attack incidents within hours of identifying them, and designating a pointsperson with domain knowledge to interact with CERT-In.

Digital Personal Protection Bill 2022: The draft bill proposes a penalty of up to ₹500 crore for data breaches.

Defence Cyber Agency (DCyA): It has recently been created by armed forces which is capable of offensive and defensive manoeuvres.

What are the challenges with India in cyber security?

Lack of cybersecurity tools: Most organisations lack the tools to identify cyberattacks.

Scarcity of cybersecurity professionals: India faces an acute scarcity of cybersecurity professionals.

Lack of participation of private sectors: Most of the organisations in India are in the private sector, and their participation remains limited in India’s cybersecurity structures. Hence, they should also come together like the **Digital Geneva Convention**.

Under the convention, over 30 global companies have signed a declaration to protect users and customers from cyber breaches and collaborate with like-minded intergovernmental and state frameworks.

Increasing Risk: There are risks of increasing cyber-attacks in the future with the introduction of 5G and the arrival of quantum computing.

What are some efforts taken by India at the global level to prevent cyber-attacks?

India has signed cybersecurity treaties with countries like the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, South Korea and the European Union.

There are also efforts in **Quad and the I2U2** (which India is a member of) to enhance cooperation in cyber incident responses, technology collaboration, capacity building, and in the improvement of cyber resilience.

United Nations General Assembly has also established two processes – **a)** Open-ended Working Group (**OEWG**), comprising the entire UN membership, **b)** the Group of Governmental Experts (**GGE**), comprising 25 countries from all the major regions.

However, there are differences amongst the member nations of these groupings and there is also a lack of global framework on cyber security.

What is the way forward for India?

India is presiding over the G20 this year. Therefore, it could make an effort to conceptualise a global framework of common minimum acceptance for cybersecurity.

100. [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**.

101. [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.

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.

India's OTT regulatory model should be **efficacious combination of self regulation and legal backing**.

102. [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**.

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.

103. 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.**

104. 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.

105. 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.

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.

106. 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**

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**.

107. 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.

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.

108. 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.

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.

109. 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.

- **Scientism-** There are attempts to rationalise the validity of knowledge organised in some non-science system according to the tenets of science.
- **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.

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.

110. 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**.

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.

111. 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.

112. 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.

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.

113. 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.

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.

114. 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.

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.

115. 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.

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.

116. 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.

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.

117. 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**.

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**.

118. 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.

The RBI report mentions that states should **mainstream capital expenditure** planning rather than treating them as residuals and meeting budgetary targets from this expenditure.

119. [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.

120. [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.

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.

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**.

121. **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.

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.

122. 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.

123. 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.

124. 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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of February, 2023

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.

General Studies Paper – 4

General Studies - 4

1. [India must become a knowledge republic as it charts its way ahead](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India must become a knowledge republic as it charts its way ahead**” published in the **Live Mint** on **10th February 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 4 – Strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance

Relevance: India as a knowledge republic.

News: Recently, a prominent NRI has said that India should work on ways to become a knowledge republic.

What is a knowledge republic?

Knowledge has a crucial role in building India’s republic. It represents India’s collective desire to learn and apply that learning, the ability to learn and create systems of learning, and the know-how Indians have gathered as a civilization.

The knowledge republic must comprise knowledge in economy, society, and even in diplomacy. Becoming a knowledge republic is a worthy choice as a unified objective of nationhood, especially for India.

Why India is still at crossroads in building a knowledge republic?

Right after the Independence, the environment of resource constraints and weak economic growth kept India from becoming a knowledge republic. At that time India has been busy with setting priorities in order.

Eventually, India has come out of those traps and has expressed itself globally as a leading nation.

Why it is time for India to become a knowledge republic?

India’s young demographic profile: India still has undisputed strength that will continue at least in the foreseeable future.

The paradox at the global level: The world at present is facing **a)** ecological crises in times of improved living standards, **b)** rising inequality in times of large wealth creation, **c)** depression and loneliness in times of a growing population, and **d)** humans losing to machines in times of rapid innovation.

In this paradoxical nature of modern development, India has emerged on the world stage as a responsible power and trustworthy partner. It can lead global efforts in fundamental thinking for problem-solving.

India’s civilizational heritage: Indian civilisation always revered knowledge. For instance, India’s richness of languages, the vastness of scriptures, the lore of ancient universities and the living tradition of rishis are testimony to the nation’s respect for knowledge.

Even now, there is a special place for teachers, gurus and knowledgeable people in the Indian heart. Typical Indian parents see education as a ticket to professional success and save significantly to support their children’s studies.

What should be done to make India as a knowledge republic?

Make the domestic environment competitive: The government has to **double the investment in youth talent** through education, strengthen avenues for research and innovation, and continue policy reforms that lead to its gainful occupation, including entrepreneurship. This will also showcase India’s talent to global markets.

Inculcate knowledge in governance: Indian society’s reverence for knowledge should be acknowledged and leveraged in policymaking and nation-building.

Worship of knowledge can pave the way for a modern republic. It is time for India to choose that path and move ahead.