

Forum IAS

7 PM COMPILATION

1st to 15th April, 2023

Features of 7 PM compilation

- ❖ Comprehensive coverage of a given current topic
- ❖ Provide you all the information you need to frame a good answer
- ❖ Critical analysis, comparative analysis, legal/constitutional provisions, current issues and challenges and best practices around the world
- ❖ Written in lucid language and point format
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- ❖ Best cost-benefit ratio according to successful aspirants

Human genome editing: significance and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise

Topic:- Science and Technology

Sub topic:- Science and Technology developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise

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India's New Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) and its significance – Explained, pointwise

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Human genome editing: significance and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise**Introduction**

Experts from around the world recently gathered in London for the Third International Summit on Human Genome Editing. The summit discussed the latest advancements in technology and emphasized the importance of responsible use. While human genome editing offers potential solutions to many challenges, it also raises ethical, legal, and regulatory concerns. Therefore, it is crucial to understand and address these challenges to ensure ethical and responsible use of the technology.

What is Human genome editing?

Genome editing is a method for making specific changes to the DNA of a cell or organism. It can be used to add, remove or alter DNA in the genome. Human genome editing technologies can be used on somatic cells (non-heritable), germline cells (not for reproduction) and germline cells (for reproduction).

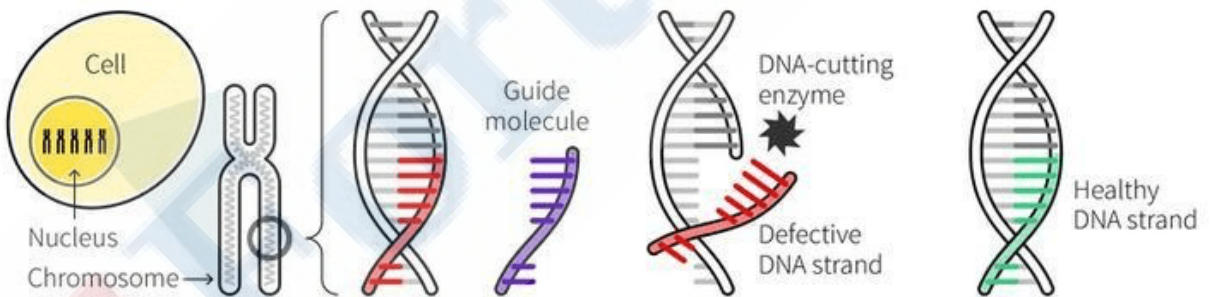
For example, scientists can use CRISPR-Cas9, a type of genome editing tool, to cut and modify specific parts of the DNA in a cell. This could potentially be used to treat genetic diseases by correcting the underlying genetic mutations responsible for the disease.

How Human genome editing is done?

DNA editing

A DNA editing technique, called CRISPR/Cas9, works like a biological version of a word-processing programme's "find and replace" function.

HOW THE TECHNIQUE WORKS



A cell is transfected with an enzyme complex containing:

- Guide molecule
- Healthy DNA copy
- DNA-cutting enzyme

A specially designed synthetic guide molecule finds the target DNA strand.

An enzyme cuts off the target DNA strand.

The defective DNA strand is replaced with a healthy copy.

Sources: Reuters; Nature; Massachusetts Institute of Technology

W. Foo, 24/04/2015

REUTERS

Source: WEF

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Read more: [Gene Therapy: Approaches, Benefits and Concerns – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the need for Human genome editing?

Increasing Genetic disorders: India is considered as the “Pandora’s Box of genetic disorders. India has a high prevalence of rare recessive genetic diseases due to its population’s heterogeneity and inbreeding rates. Human genome editing could potentially address this issue by correcting or eliminating disease-causing mutations in affected individuals or preventing the transmission of these mutations to future generations.

Rising incidence of viral disease: According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 2.1 million people in India were living with HIV in 2019, with a prevalence rate of 0.2.

Cancer as a growing health concern: According to The Report of National Cancer Registry Programme, 2020 India’s cancer burden could increase from 1.39 million during this year to 1.57 million in 2025. Human gene editing can address this burden.

Rising issues of side effects of treatment: Genome editing can be used to create personalized medicine based on an individual’s unique genetic makeup. This could lead to more effective and efficient treatments with fewer side effects.

Increasing food allergies: According to a study published in the Indian Journal of Pediatrics, the prevalence of food allergies in Indian children is estimated to be around 6-8%. Human gene editing can also be used to create allergy-free foods.

Read more: [Humans Decoded](#)

What are the advantages of Human genome editing?

Potential cures for genetic diseases: Genome editing could potentially offer a cure for genetic diseases that currently have no effective treatments. For example, using genome editing to correct the genetic mutation responsible for cystic fibrosis could cure the disease.

Can treat cancer diseases: Human gene editing can improve the accuracy and efficiency of cancer modeling, which is crucial for developing cancer therapies. For instance, The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA), a cancer genomics program in the US, has already mapped genomic changes in 33 cancer types in order to improve cancer treatment.

Can treat viral diseases: Human genome editing has the potential to cure viral diseases by modifying the patient’s own immune cells to better target and destroy the virus. One approach is to use CRISPR-Cas9 to edit the DNA of T cells, a type of immune cell, to make them resistant to HIV infection. Another approach is to use CRISPR-Cas9 to remove the hepatitis B virus from infected liver cells.

Read more: [Scientists tried CRISPR to fight HIV](#)

Increase understanding of the human genome: Studying the effects of editing specific genes could help researchers better understand the role of those genes in human biology and disease.

Advancements in scientific research: Genome editing can be used to create animal models of human diseases, allowing scientists to better understand the mechanisms of these diseases and develop new treatments.

Enhanced biosecurity: Genome editing can be used to develop disease-resistant animals, preventing the spread of zoonotic diseases.

Improving agricultural productivity: Genome editing could be used to create crops that are more resistant to pests, require less water or are more nutritious, leading to increased agricultural productivity and food security. It’s worth noting that while there are potential advantages to genome editing, there are also significant ethical and safety concerns that must be carefully considered before any widespread use of the technology.

Read more: [What is CRISPR Technology?](#)

What are the challenges associated with Human genome editing?

Ethical concerns: The use of gene editing raises ethical questions such as whether it is appropriate to genetically engineer embryos, or to modify traits that are not related to the disease. For instance, editing genes to enhance intelligence or physical appearance could lead to unintended consequences and exacerbate social inequalities.

Concerns over “designer babies”: There are concerns that genome editing could be used to create “designer babies” for social rather than medical reasons. This raises ethical concerns and could lead to the creation of a genetically-engineered elite. For example, editing the genes of an embryo to increase its intelligence could create a societal divide between those who have access to technology and those who do not.

Off-target effects: Gene editing could unintentionally modify genes other than the targeted one, causing unpredictable consequences. For example, a study published in 2017 reported that CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing resulted in unexpected mutations in mice.

Safety concerns: Gene editing could lead to unintended consequences, such as off-target effects or immune reactions, that could pose a risk to the health of the individual undergoing the procedure. For example, editing the wrong gene could cause a person to develop cancer.

Germline editing: Until now, all therapeutic interventions in humans using genome editing have been performed in somatic cells (i.e. only the patient gets affected, no chance of inheriting the altered genes by the patient’s offspring).

But, editing the germline can lead to unpredictable changes that can be passed on to future generations. This raises ethical and safety concerns. For example, editing the genes of a human embryo can result in unintended genetic changes that can be passed down to offspring.

Note: *Germline gene editing involves altering the specific genes of an egg, sperm cell, or early embryo (i.e., up to five days after fertilization) in a laboratory dish. Germline gene editing removes, disrupts, alters, or corrects faulty elements of DNA within a gene in sex cells.*

Lack of long-term data: The long-term effects of gene editing are not yet fully understood, and there are concerns that modifications made to an individual’s DNA could have unintended consequences that only become apparent years or even decades later. For example, there may be unforeseen consequences of using CRISPR to eliminate a particular disease-causing gene that is not fully understood.

Regulatory challenges: At present, there is no regulating body to keep a check on the practices and applications of Human genome editing technology. It may therefore lead to reduced transparency, low quality and may also increase the unnecessary delay in the treatment of patients.

Further creating a strong regulatory oversight can be difficult to achieve given the rapidly evolving nature of the technology and the varying regulatory approaches taken by different countries.

For example, the US FDA currently regulates gene-edited animals as drugs, while in Europe they are considered to be genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and are subject to different regulations.

Ecological impacts: Gene drives can be used to propagate a set of genes with negative traits throughout a population, which can lead to severe ecological consequences. For example, introducing gene-edited mosquitoes that are resistant to malaria could lead to the elimination of the mosquito population, which could disrupt the ecosystem.

Uncontrolled clinical trials: There are currently no standard norms for clinical trials to check the efficacy of genome editing treatment. This can lead to uncontrolled clinical trials, which can result in patients receiving ineffective or potentially harmful treatments.

Read more: [GM Crops in India: Issues and challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done before permitting widespread applications of human genome editing?

Continued research: Further research is needed to fully understand the potential benefits and risks of human genome editing. This includes long-term studies on the safety and efficacy of different gene editing techniques, as well as research on the ethical, social, and legal implications of the technology.

Responsible use: It is important that human genome editing is used responsibly and ethically, with appropriate regulation and oversight. This includes ensuring that the technology is used only for medical purposes and that it does not exacerbate existing inequalities.

Collaboration and transparency: Collaboration between scientists, policymakers, and the public is important to ensure that human genome editing is used responsibly and transparently. This includes open communication about the potential benefits and risks of the technology, as well as consultation with the broader public on key ethical and policy issues.

Development of ethical guidelines: The development of clear ethical guidelines is important to ensure that human genome editing is used responsibly and ethically. This includes guidelines on issues such as the use of gene editing for non-medical purposes, the editing of germline cells, and the informed consent of individuals undergoing the procedure.

Investment in infrastructure: Investment in infrastructure is needed to support the development and deployment of gene editing technologies. This includes investment in research facilities, regulatory agencies, and public health systems, as well as the development of international standards and protocols for the use of gene editing.

Educate the public: The public should be educated about the potential benefits and risks of human genome editing, as well as the ethical and social implications of the technology. This can help to ensure that public opinion and policy decisions are informed by accurate and up-to date information.

Sources: [Times of India](#), [NYTimes](#), [BBC](#), [NCDIR](#), and [WEF](#)

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

India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

Recently, the second G20 Sherpa Meeting held in Kerala focused on the critical role of digital public infrastructure (DPI) in improving development outcomes and India's success in implementing DPI at scale over the past decade. The event was organised by the G20 Secretariat in partnership with Nasscom, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), and the Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL). The DPI initiative aims to create a public technology stack that provides digital identity, data protection, and consent management to all users, but it also poses several challenges that must be addressed.

What is Digital Public Infrastructure?

Digital Public Infrastructure is a necessary support to the development and functioning of digital systems and services that benefit society as a whole. It provides necessary technical and organizational frameworks to ensure that digital services are secure, reliable, and accessible to everyone. For example, an essential element of Digital Public Infrastructure is the internet, which enables people to access information and services from anywhere in the world. Another example is digital identity systems that allow individuals to securely and conveniently access online services such as banking, healthcare, and government services.

What is the need for Digital Public Infrastructure?

Huge digital divide: NFHS Report suggests that only 57.1% of the male population and 33.3% of the female population had ever used the internet. This gender gap was present across all states as demonstrated. The development of DPI in India can help create a digital ecosystem that is accessible, efficient, and transparent, and can empower citizens to participate in the digital economy.

The potential of Digital initiatives: The World Bank Group's G2Px initiative researched social protection response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They found that countries that used digital databases and data exchange platforms reached 51% of their population with cash transfers. On the other hand, countries that could not rely on existing databases reached only 16% of their population. Linking a financial account with an ID or phone number helped the government to roll out cash assistance more quickly during COVID-19.

To avoid monopolisation, authoritarianism and digital colonisation: India needs a strong digital infrastructure and legal framework to benefit from the digital world and prevent digital colonisation. India can lead multilateral discussions to create global standards to prevent regulatory arbitrage by Big Tech and ensure a fair and democratic digital ecosystem.

Poor Indian agriculture: despite being a major contributor to the country's economy and employment, it faces several challenges such as low productivity, small landholdings, inadequate access to technology, credit and markets, and weather uncertainties. DPI can improve the state of Indian agriculture by providing farmers with access to vital information, market opportunities, and resources necessary for increased efficiency, productivity, and profitability.

What are some significant government initiatives on Digital Public Infrastructure?



Source: ORF

Digital India: Launched in 2015, Digital India is a flagship initiative of the Indian government aimed at transforming India into a digitally empowered society and economy. The initiative includes projects such as Digital Locker, e-sign framework, and National Scholarship Portal, among others.

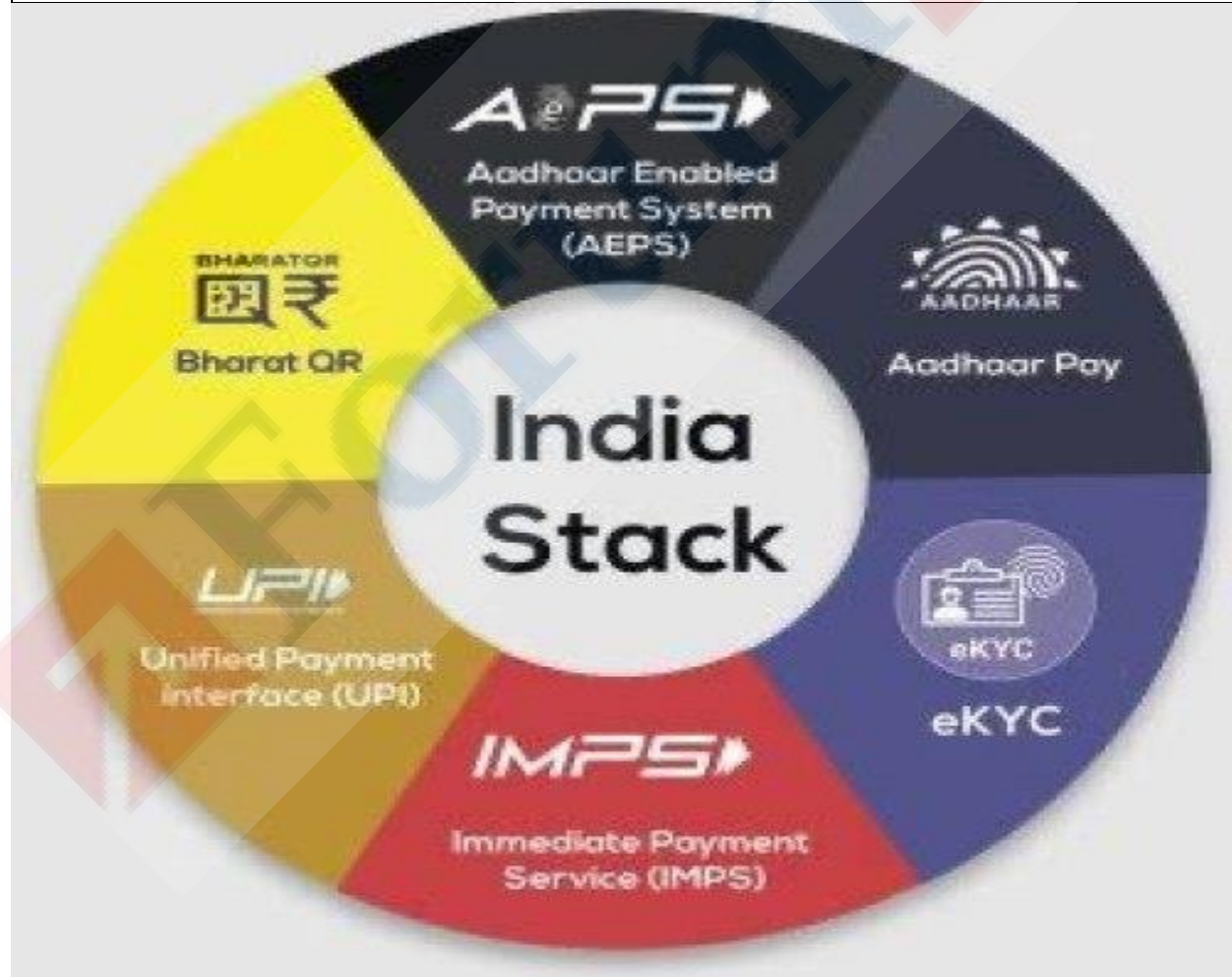
BharatNet – BharatNet is a high-speed broadband network project aimed at providing affordable internet connectivity to rural areas in India. The project involves the laying of optic fiber cables across the country, enabling high-speed internet access for citizens in remote areas.

National Health Stack: The National Health Stack is a proposed digital infrastructure for the healthcare sector in India, which aims to provide a common platform for health data exchange and interoperability. The initiative aims to improve healthcare access and delivery in India by enabling seamless information exchange among various stakeholders in the healthcare sector.

National Knowledge Network (NKN): NKN is a high-speed network that connects universities, research institutions, libraries, and other knowledge hubs across India. The network enables the sharing of knowledge and resources, facilitating collaborative research and innovation.

UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance): It is a mobile app launched by the Indian government that provides access to various government services and schemes. The app aims to provide a single platform for accessing government services and is available in multiple languages.

Read more: [The government initiatives to protect the fast-growing digital economy.](#)



Source: UIDAI

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Government e-Marketplace (GeM): The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is an online platform that enables government departments and agencies to procure goods and services from registered vendors. The platform aims to promote transparency and efficiency in government procurement processes.

India's Modular Open Source Identity Platform (MOSIP): It helps governments and other user organisations implement a digital, foundational identity system in a cost-effective way. Nations can use MOSIP freely to build their own identity systems. Being modular in its architecture, MOSIP provides flexibility to countries in how they implement and configure their systems and helps avoid vendor lock-in. It is adopted by nine nations.

The Union Budget 2022 in India announced four key initiatives: **a)** to establish an open platform for health with digital registries, a unique health identity, and a consent framework, **b)** initiative is the Digital Ecosystem for Skilling and Livelihood (DESH-Stack), which will provide online training to citizens for upskilling, **c)** initiative is the Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP) that aims to simplify the movement of goods across different modes of transport and travel, **d)** initiative is an open-source mobility stack that aims to facilitate seamless travel for citizens.

Must read: [India's DPIs, catching the next wave](#)

What are the advantages of developing Digital Public Infrastructure?

Improve Efficiency: Digital Public Infrastructure can streamline and automate processes, reducing the time and effort required to access services. For example, the use of online portals for government services like passport application and income tax filing can reduce the need for physical visits to government offices.

Increase Access: Digital Public Infrastructure can improve access to services for people living in remote areas. For example, the use of digital learning platforms can provide students in rural areas with access to quality education.

Better Service Quality: Digital Public Infrastructure can help deliver services of higher quality by enabling real-time monitoring and feedback mechanisms. For instance, the use of digital health records can help healthcare providers deliver personalized and efficient care.

Increase Transparency: Digital Public Infrastructure can improve transparency in service delivery by providing citizens with access to information and data. For instance, the use of online portals for government services can provide citizens with information on the status of their applications and transactions.

Digital Financial Inclusion: Digital Public Infrastructure can help expand financial access to underbanked and unbanked populations in India. For example, the use of mobile wallets and digital payment platforms can enable easy and secure transactions for people who do not have access to traditional banking services.

Secure Online Transactions: Digital Public Infrastructure can provide secure and trusted platforms for online transactions. For instance, the use of digital signatures and secure communication channels can prevent fraud and ensure the confidentiality and integrity of sensitive data.

Read more: [\[Kurukshetra December Summary\] Bridging the Digital Divide – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the challenges associated with Digital Public Infrastructure in India?

Digital Divide: There is a significant digital divide in India, with many people lacking access to digital infrastructure such as smartphones and internet connectivity. For instance, people living in rural areas may not have access to reliable internet connectivity, which can limit their access to digital services.

Cybersecurity: Digital Public Infrastructure is vulnerable to cyber-attacks and data breaches, which can compromise sensitive data and transactions. For example, online payment gateways and digital wallets can be targeted by hackers, leading to financial losses.

Interoperability: There is a lack of interoperability among different digital platforms and systems in India, making it difficult for users to access services seamlessly. For instance, different government departments may use different platforms for service delivery, which can create confusion and inefficiencies.

Data Privacy: Digital Public Infrastructure raises concerns around data privacy, as personal and sensitive data may be collected and shared by various entities. For example, the collection of biometric data for digital identity verification may raise privacy concerns among citizens.

Digital Literacy: There is a need to improve digital literacy among citizens in India to enable them to fully utilize digital services and platforms. For instance, many people may not be aware of the benefits of digital platforms or may lack the necessary skills to access and use digital services.

Read more: [Public Key Infrastructure \(PKI\): a Digital security infrastructure](#)

What should be done to improve India's Digital Public Infrastructure further?

Improve internet connectivity: Increase internet connectivity speed, expand broadband infrastructure and ensure the availability of affordable internet services in rural areas as well.

Digitize government services: Digitize government services and make them accessible through a single platform such as e-governance portals, like e-Seva in Andhra Pradesh.

Encourage digital payments: Encourage digital payments, such as UPI, and make them easier to use through improved interfaces and faster transaction processing.

Promote digital literacy: Promote digital literacy among the general population through training programs and awareness campaigns.

Develop a robust cybersecurity framework: Develop a robust cybersecurity framework to ensure the safety of digital assets, such as Aadhaar and banking information, and prevent cyber attacks.

Leverage emerging technologies: Leverage emerging technologies, such as blockchain and artificial intelligence, to improve the efficiency and transparency of government services.

Build a robust digital identity system: Build a robust digital identity system, such as Aadhaar, to enable seamless authentication and verification for access to government services, banking, and other transactions.

Facilitate the growth of digital startups: Facilitate the growth of digital startups by providing incentives, such as tax breaks and access to funding, and creating a conducive environment for innovation.

Collaboration between countries: It is necessary for the joint management and maintenance of DPI. Strategic decisions related to choice, data portability, interoperability etc., need to be made together to create and support new models for digital cooperation.

Sources: [The Hindu](#), [ORF](#), [The Economic Times](#), [The Print](#), [Livemint](#), [The Hindu Business Line](#) and [The World Bank](#).

Syllabus: GS 2: Governance – e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential & GS 3: Economic development – Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

India's New Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) and its significance – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) document for India was just released. It focuses on improving certain processes and procedures to increase exports and lower transaction costs. The new FTP also emphasises a move towards processes that make trade easier and a focus on infrastructure for both manufacturing and services. However, there are some issues that must be addressed before deploying the new FTP.

What are the salient features of India's new FTP?

Must read: [Foreign Trade Policy 2023 announced](#)

What is the significance of the new FTP?

Shift from incentives to remissions: The new FTP marks a shift from industry-specific subsidies to trade facilitation processes, focusing on infrastructure for manufacturing and services.

Compliance with WTO rules: The new FTP focuses on WTO-compliant export support schemes like RoDTEP, while incentives linked to level of exports are being phased out.

E-commerce exports: The new FTP raises the consignment cap on e-commerce exports, but questions remain unanswered regarding the tariff treatment of such exports globally and data sharing principles.

MSMEs and towns of excellence: The new FTP reduces transaction fees for MSMEs and creates towns of excellence to boost their manufacturing and agricultural activities.

Overlooks structural changes post-Covid: The new FTP does not take into account the structural changes in the global export order post-Covid, and overlooks the structure of imports and the role of FTAs.

Read more: [RoDTEP Scheme and Export competitiveness – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the expected benefits of the new FTP?

Boost in exports: The new FTP aims to promote exports by reducing transaction costs, enhancing trade facilitation processes, and offering remissions on duties and taxes on export products.

For example, RoDTEP scheme will help reduce the cost of exports and make Indian products more competitive in the global market.

Encourage MSMEs: The reduction in transaction fees for MSMEs and the creation of towns of excellence will help MSMEs to expand their business and increase their exports. For example, with reduced transaction fees, MSMEs can invest more in product development and marketing.

Facilitate decentralization of manufacturing and agriculture: The new FTP promotes a decentralized approach to manufacturing and agriculture with the principle of 'one district, one product.' This will help promote local products, create jobs, and reduce regional imbalances.

For example, the promotion of local handicrafts from a particular district can help to create employment opportunities and encourage the growth of the handicrafts sector in that region.

Improving e-commerce exports: Raising the consignment cap on e-commerce exports will benefit small businesses and startups. For example, small businesses can take advantage of the new policy to reach a global audience through online marketplaces, leading to increased exports and growth of the e-commerce sector.

Enhancing competitiveness: The new FTP aims to provide a level playing field for domestic businesses by phasing out industry-specific subsidies and focusing on infrastructure

development. This will help improve the competitiveness of Indian businesses in the global market.

For example, the development of efficient ports and logistics infrastructure will help businesses reduce the cost of exporting and become more competitive.

International compliance: The emphasis on WTO-compliant schemes like RoDTEP and elimination of industry-specific subsidies is expected to improve India's standing in international trade.

Universal focus on infrastructure: The shift towards a universal focus on infrastructure for manufacturing and services is expected to have long-term benefits.

Read more: [Long on intent: On India's Foreign Trade Policy](#)

What are the challenges in implementing the new FTP?

WTO compliance: India needs to ensure that all its export promotion schemes comply with WTO rules, as it has faced criticism and even lost disputes in the past.

For instance, the WTO struck down India's export subsidy schemes last year, leading to a shift from 'incentives' to 'remissions' in the new FTP.

Implementation and coordination: Implementation of the new FTP will require coordination between multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, industry bodies, and exporters. For example, the effective implementation of RoDTEP scheme, the flagship export support scheme, will require coordination between the customs department and the commerce ministry.

Infrastructure and logistics: India's poor infrastructure and logistics have been a long-standing challenge for exporters, leading to higher transaction costs and delays.

For instance, the high cost of transportation and poor connectivity has led to perishable goods like vegetables and fruits getting spoiled in transit, hurting exports.

Global trade dynamics: The global trade environment is constantly evolving, with geopolitical tensions and protectionist measures posing challenges for exporters.

For example, the ongoing trade war between the US and China has disrupted global supply chains, affecting Indian exporters who source raw materials or sell them to these countries.

Digital infrastructure: With the rise of e-commerce and digital exports, India needs to improve its digital infrastructure to enable seamless online transactions and data sharing.

For instance, the new FTP raises the consignment cap on e-commerce exports, but questions remain about the tariff treatment of such exports globally and the principles of data sharing that underlie it.

Structural Changes in Global Export Order: The FTP has not taken into account the structural changes in the global export order post-Covid, which could impact the effectiveness of the policy.

Lack of Focus on Imports: The new FTP has overlooked the structure of imports altogether, which could create imbalances in India's trade balance.

Limited Focus on Services Exports: The new FTP does not delve much into services exports, which are becoming increasingly important for India's economy.

What should be done?

Incorporate macroeconomic analysis: The new FTP should include a SWOT analysis and macroeconomic analysis to provide a comprehensive view of the impact of the policy on the economy.

Note: SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. A SWOT analysis is a framework to help assess and understand the internal and external forces that may create opportunities or risks for an organization.

Mainstreaming gender into the new FTP: Research by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and World Bank has recently proven that trade and trade policy affect men and women differently

— in terms of wages, consumption, welfare and in the quality of jobs created. Therefore, it is vital to include the intent and specific provisions for enabling women in the policies that have an impact on the speed and direction of the country's trade growth.

Focus on infrastructure: The new FTP should focus on creating a robust infrastructure for manufacturing and services, which will help in boosting exports. For instance, the government can invest in developing industrial parks, improving connectivity and logistics, and upgrading technology.

Promotion of innovation: The new FTP should promote innovation in exports by providing incentives and support to exporters who are developing new products and technologies. For instance, the government can provide grants and tax incentives to start-ups and MSMEs involved in research and development.

Need regular review: The new FTP should be reviewed regularly to assess its effectiveness and make necessary changes to ensure its objectives are met. For example, the government can conduct a periodic review of the impact of the RoDTEP scheme and make necessary modifications to improve its effectiveness.

Address structural changes in the global export order: The new FTP should consider the structural changes that have occurred in the global export order post-Covid to ensure that it remains relevant.

Need holistic approach: The government should adopt a more holistic approach while formulating the new FTP by taking into account the structural changes post-Covid in the global export order, the role of FTAs, and services exports. For example, the government can explore the possibility of negotiating more FTAs with countries that have a demand for Indian goods and services.

Sources: [The Hindu](#), Livemint ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), [Indian Express](#), [The Hindu Business Line](#) and [Economic Times](#).

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

Issues with the drug regulatory system in India – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The Indian pharmaceutical industry gained global recognition during the pandemic for its role in exporting drugs, medical equipment, and vaccines to other nations. However, a series of incidents in the past six months have threatened to damage India's reputation as a "pharmacy to the world." These incidents include deaths in Gambia linked to cough syrups made by Indian companies and an eye infection outbreak in the US caused by an Indian-produced eye drop. These incidents have raised concerns about drug regulation in India, its safety and quality standards.

About the drug regulatory system in India

Drug regulation in India involves multiple government bodies and laws, both for domestic and exported drugs. Here are some key points:

Drug regulation of Domestic Drugs:

Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO): The CDSCO is the primary regulatory body in India that regulates the manufacture, sale, and distribution of drugs in the country. It also conducts periodic inspections of drug manufacturing facilities to ensure compliance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and other regulations.

Drug Controller General of India (DCGI): The DCGI is responsible for approving new drugs for marketing in India, and for monitoring their safety and efficacy.

Drug Price Control Order (DPCO): The DPCO regulates the prices of certain essential drugs in India to ensure they remain affordable to the general public.

State-level drug regulatory bodies: At the state level, there exist State Drug Regulatory Authorities (SDRAs), which are statutory bodies created under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. They fall under the ambit of the respective Health Departments of each state.

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and its associated rules: Domestic drugs are regulated under this act.

Drug regulation of Exported Drugs:

CDSCO: It is responsible for regulating the export of drugs from India. It issues certificates of pharmaceutical products (CPP) to ensure that drugs exported from India meet the quality, safety, and efficacy standards of the importing country. The CDSCO also regulates the labelling, packaging, and transportation of drugs exported from India.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT): The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) organisation is an attached office of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and is headed by the Director General of Foreign Trade. The DGFT issues guidelines for the export of drugs, including the requirement of obtaining necessary licenses, permits, and certificates. Exporters must obtain an Import-Export Code (IEC) from the DGFT to export drugs.

Export Inspection Council (EIC): The role of the EIC is to ensure that products notified under the Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act 1963 are meeting the requirements of the importing countries in respect of their quality and safety.

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992: Exported drugs are regulated under the provisions of these two acts.

The World Health Organization (WHO): It pre-qualifies certain drugs manufactured in India for use in its global health programs.

The United States Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) also regulate drugs manufactured in India for export to their respective countries.

What are the recent irregularities in Indian drug industries?

The Indian drug industry has faced several irregularities in recent years, including:

Quality Control Issues: There have been several instances where Indian drug manufacturers have been found to be violating quality control regulations, leading to substandard or fake drugs in the market. For example, In January (2023), eye drops manufactured by a Chennai-based pharma company were found to be contaminated with a deadly drug-resistant bacterium.

Data Manipulation: In 2020, India's drug regulator found that a Hyderabad-based pharmaceutical company had submitted manipulated data to get approval for a drug used to treat bacterial infections.

Non-Compliance with Regulations: Indian drug manufacturers have been accused of noncompliance with regulations and not following good manufacturing practices. For example, officials from the Haryana Food and Drug Administration inspected Maiden's manufacturing plant at Sonipat following the WHO alert, they found several discrepancies in the records, due to which the quality of the raw material could not be ascertained.

Read more: [U.S.-CDC probe into cough syrup deaths in The Gambia pins blame on Indian manufacturer](#)

Supply Chain Issues: There have been instances of counterfeit drugs and substandard raw materials entering the supply chain, leading to quality issues in the final products. For example, according to The US Trade Representative (USTR) report, nearly 20% of all pharmaceutical goods sold in the Indian market are counterfeit.

Price Fixing: In 2018, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) imposed penalties on three pharmaceutical companies for allegedly fixing the prices of a certain drug. These irregularities have raised concerns about the safety and efficacy of drugs manufactured in India and highlighted the need for better regulatory oversight and enforcement.

Read more: [Uzbekistan says 18 children die due to cough syrup made by an Indian firm; blame it on ethylene glycol](#)

What are the challenges associated with drug regulation in India?

Drug regulation in India faces several challenges, including:

Lack of resources and infrastructure: India has a vast population, and the country's drug regulatory system is often overburdened, with a shortage of staff, laboratories, and equipment. For example, India's drug regulatory agency, CDSCO, faces resource constraints such as limited funding, inadequate staffing, and outdated infrastructure, which can make it difficult to effectively oversee drug safety and efficacy.

Corruption: Corruption is a significant issue in India's drug regulatory system, with reports of officials accepting bribes to approve drugs. In 2013, the Ranbaxy scandal exposed how the company had falsified data and received approvals for drugs that did not meet quality standards.

Price Control: The Indian government regulates the prices of certain drugs to make them affordable for the general public, which can lead to conflicts with pharmaceutical companies. For example, in 2013, the Indian government allowed local companies to produce generic versions of a cancer drug that was under patent protection, leading to a legal dispute with the drug's manufacturer.

Delayed approval process: The approval process for drugs in India can be lengthy and cumbersome, with approvals taking years to obtain. For example, the approval process for the vaccine for the COVID-19 pandemic in India took longer than in other countries, leading to delays in vaccination efforts.

Inadequate monitoring: The lack of a robust system for monitoring drug safety and efficacy is a significant challenge. This can lead to dangerous drugs being sold in the market, as was the case with the painkiller Nimesulide, which was banned in several countries but continued to be sold in India for years.

Poor pharmacovigilance: Pharmacovigilance is the process of monitoring the safety of medicines once they are on the market. In India, the pharmacovigilance system is still developing, and there is a lack of awareness among healthcare professionals and patients about reporting adverse drug reactions (ADRs). For example, there have been reports of adverse reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine in India, but these have not been adequately investigated.

Fragmented regulatory framework: India's regulatory framework is fragmented between the central government and state governments, leading to varying levels of quality supervision and providing arbitrage opportunities. This has led to questions about the sampling methodology used in assessing drug quality.

Read more: [INDIAN PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR CHALLENGES AND REFORMS](#)

What should be done to resolve issues related to the drug regulatory system in India?

Thakur's Prescription

Problem	Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Poor coordination, inconsistent application of law across states 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Amend Rule 69 of D&C Act
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Weak drug quality investigation system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Use statistical method to draw drug samples for testing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Weak prosecution of sub-standard drugmakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Enforce Section 27 of D&C Act; DCC guidelines (2008) "illegal and unconstitutional"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Lack of safety norms for generic drugs sold in India 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Make bioequivalence studies, stability testing mandatory for all generics ◦ Establish a system for nationwide withdrawal of bad batches of drugs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ No proper list of sub-standard drugmakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Mandate states to contribute info. to an easily searchable national database
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Sub-standard drugs used in govt hospitals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Enact a public procurement law for uniform blacklisting norms and transparency between procuring agencies

Source: Economic Times

Strengthening the regulatory framework: The government should strengthen the regulatory framework and enforce stricter laws to ensure that the drugs and medicines produced in India meet the required safety and quality standards.

Increasing inspections and audits: Regular inspections and audits should be conducted at all levels of the pharmaceutical industry to identify and address any potential issues related to the manufacturing process, quality control, and distribution.

Enhancing transparency and accountability: The government should promote transparency and accountability by making the regulatory process more accessible and understandable to the public and stakeholders. This can be done by improving the dissemination of information and conducting public consultations.

Providing training and capacity building: The government should invest in training and capacity building for regulatory agencies and industry professionals to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to maintain high standards of drug quality and safety.

Collaboration with International Bodies: India should collaborate with international bodies like the World Health Organization (WHO) to adopt best practices in drug regulation. This will help ensure that Indian pharmaceutical companies are following global safety and quality standards. The authorities should also work closely with international bodies to monitor the safety of drugs that are exported from India to other countries.

Development of a robust pharmacovigilance system: The government can invest in the development of a robust pharmacovigilance system to monitor adverse drug reactions and prevent any potential harm to patients.

Sources: [The Times of India](#), [Outlook](#), [The Quint](#), [The Diplomat](#), [The Hindustan Times](#), [Financial Express](#), [Decan Herald](#) and [Economic Times](#).

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

China – Russia relations and its implications on India – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The Chinese President's recent state visit to Russia highlights the growing strategic partnership between China and Russia, which has significant implications for India. Despite the Ukraine crisis, China remains committed to enhancing its partnership with Russia, as it sees the United States and its allies as determined to contain China. This growing China-Russia relations could have security, economic, and geopolitical implications for India.

What are the recent developments in China – Russia relations?

China-Russia relations have been evolving rapidly in recent years, with both countries seeking to deepen their strategic partnership. Here are some recent developments:

Economic Ties: China and Russia have been increasing their economic cooperation, particularly in the areas of energy and technology. For example, in the aftermath of the Ukraine invasion, Russia's trade with China in the Chinese yuan multiplied by an extraordinary 80 times.

Military Ties: The two countries have also been increasing their military cooperation, with joint military exercises becoming more frequent. In November 2021, the two sides signed a **Road Map for Military cooperation for 2021-2025** to guide collaboration in this sphere.

Political Ties: China and Russia have been aligning themselves more closely on the international stage, particularly in their opposition to the United States. For example, in 2021, China and Russia issued a joint statement condemning the United States for its interference in other countries internal affairs.

De- Dollarization Efforts: Russia and China have a strong economic relationship and both countries are working together to reduce the global reliance on the US dollar. They believe that the current global economic system is too dependent on the US and seek to change this. Additionally, they are against the use of unilateral sanctions as a means of enforcing foreign policy.

COVID-19 Vaccine Cooperation: China and Russia have also been cooperating in the development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. In 2020, Russia approved a Chinese COVID-19 vaccine for use within its borders, and in 2021, China approved the Russian Sputnik V vaccine for emergency use.

What are the implications of recent China – Russia relations on the US and its allies?

Strategic Competition: The growing alignment between China and Russia poses a strategic challenge to the United States and its allies. The two countries' combined economic and military power could undermine U.S. influence in key regions, such as the Asia-Pacific and Europe. For example, Saudi Arabia and Iran announced they would re-establish full diplomatic ties and reopen their embassies in each other's countries after talks mediated in China. It indicates the decline of the USA's influence and boosts to Chinese influence.

Economic Competition: The deepening economic ties between China and Russia could also create economic competition for the United States and its allies. For example, both sides

committed to enhancing trade relationships, especially energy partnership and full completion of the 30-year, \$300 billion gas pipeline called Power of Siberia, that was signed in 2014. It could threaten the United States' energy security.

Military Threat: The growing military cooperation between China and Russia could also pose a military threat to the United States and its allies. If China and Russia continue to conduct joint military exercises and develop advanced military technology together, it could make it more difficult for the United States to defend its interests in key regions such as the Asia-Pacific.

Diplomatic Isolation: The closer alignment between China and Russia could also isolate the United States diplomatically, making it more difficult for the United States to rally support from its traditional allies in the face of challenges posed by China and Russia.

For example, Iran, Russia and China held naval exercises in the Gulf of Oman, along with a few other countries. It is opposite's to the United States' efforts to impose sanctions on Iran and North Korea could undermine the United States' diplomatic efforts to contain these countries.

Cybersecurity Threats: The increased alignment between China and Russia also raises concerns about cybersecurity threats to the United States and its allies.

For example, China and Russia could coordinate their efforts to launch cyberattacks on U.S. infrastructure and institutions. As China and Russia stand behind their No-limits partnership, announced last year and have embarked on a "New Era" of ties that will be a "model for major power relations.

What are the implications of recent China – Russia relations on India?

The relationship between China and Russia has been growing stronger in recent years, with both countries seeking to increase their influence on the global stage. However, this alliance has significant implications for India.

Strategic implications: The strategic implication is particularly in the areas of defense and security. India has been trying to counter China's growing military presence in the region, and a closer alliance between China and Russia could make this more difficult.

Geopolitical implications: The closer alignment between China and Russia could also have geopolitical implications for India, particularly in terms of its relations with other countries in the region. India has been trying to strengthen its ties with countries such as Japan and Australia to counter China's influence, but a stronger China-Russia alliance could make this more difficult.

Military cooperation: One of the main implications of the growing relationship between China and Russia for India is the potential for increased military cooperation between the two countries. This could lead to a greater military threat to India, particularly given the ongoing tensions between India and China over their border disputes.

For example, the recent military exercises conducted by China and Russia in the Arctic region have raised concerns in India about the possibility of increased military cooperation between the two countries.

Regional politics: China – Russia might work together on regional political issues, such as the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. This could marginalize India's influence in the region and make it more difficult for India to pursue its foreign policy goals and undermine India's strategic interests in the region.

Economic competition: The growing economic ties between China and Russia could also have implications for India. If China and Russia deepen their economic partnership, it could create a more formidable economic competitor for India in the global market.

For example, both are in favour of using the Chinese yuan for settlements between Russia and the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This economic pact has raised concerns in India about the potential impact on its own economic growth and competitiveness.

What should be done by India?

Diplomatic Measures: India should engage in active diplomacy with both China and Russia to strengthen its ties with these countries. This could involve high-level visits, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people contacts. For example, India could invite Chinese and Russian delegations to visit India and engage in constructive dialogue to deepen mutual understanding and cooperation.

Economic Measures: India should also focus on enhancing its economic ties with China and Russia. This could involve exploring new trade and investment opportunities, as well as working on joint economic initiatives.

For example, India, China, and Russia's recent initiative to create a common digital currency could be beneficial in strengthening their economic cooperation. This digital currency would facilitate easier transactions between the three countries. It could also promote trade and investment among the three nations and contribute to the development of a multipolar world order.

Regional Measures: India should also focus on strengthening its position in the region by collaborating with other countries in the neighborhood. This could involve working on regional initiatives to promote peace, stability, and economic development.

For example, India could work with other countries in the region, such as Japan and South Korea, to establish a regional security framework that would counterbalance the growing influence of China and Russia.

Strategic Engagement: India needs to engage in strategic cooperation with both China and Russia to ensure regional stability and security. This could involve collaboration on issues such as counter-terrorism, maritime security, and climate change.

Multilateral Engagement: India should engage more actively in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, G20, and SCO to project its voice and influence in the international community. India should also explore the possibility of leading initiatives in these forums that are aimed at promoting peace, stability, and development in the region.

For example, India could work with China and Russia to promote regional stability and connectivity through the SCO framework.

India can take several steps to address the challenges posed by the growing China -Russia relationship. These steps include **strengthening ties with other like-minded countries, building regional partnerships, promoting economic integration, investing in military capabilities, and engaging in diplomatic dialogue.** By pursuing these measures, India can enhance its own strategic partnerships and ensure peace and stability in the region.

Overall, India should adopt a proactive and strategic approach to develop its relations with China and Russia. By doing so, India can position itself as a key player in the region and mitigate the potential negative implications of the evolving dynamics between China and Russia.

Source: Indian Express ([Article 1](#), [Article 2](#) and [Article 3](#)), The Diplomat ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), [Economic Times](#), [The Hindu](#), [Times of India](#) and [Deccan Herald](#).

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

India – Bhutan relations and its significance – Explained, pointwise**Introduction**

India and Bhutan have maintained a close relationship for many years. The recent meeting between both countries focused on the ongoing border negotiations between Bhutan and China. The meeting highlighted the close friendship between the two countries and their commitment to guiding India – Bhutan relations to new heights. This relationship is significant for both countries and has geopolitical implications in the region.

About India – Bhutan relations in the past and what are the various areas of cooperation?

Since 1947, when Bhutan got its independence, it has been close and friendly with India. India is Bhutan's biggest trading partner, and it gives Bhutan a lot of money and technical help.

Read here: [India-Bhutan relations](#)

What are the recent developments in India – Bhutan relations?

India extends additional “standby” credit facility to Bhutan: India has extended an additional “standby” credit facility to Bhutan upon its request, which will be over and above the two existing standby credit facilities that are already in operation between the two countries.

Consideration of Bhutan's request to sell power from the Basochhu hydroelectric project:

India has agreed to consider Bhutan's request to sell power from its hydro-power project known as the Basochhu hydroelectric project, which could be done through the energy exchange mechanism of the market.

Developing long-term bilateral arrangements: India is focusing on developing a sustainable long-term arrangement for the export of agriculture commodities from Bhutan. They also plan to expand their energy cooperation beyond hydroelectric projects. Additionally, India aims to develop a long-term bilateral arrangement to ensure a reliable supply of critical commodities to Bhutan. These commodities include petroleum, fertilisers, and coal.

Read more: [PM holds talks with Bhutan King; focus on bilateral ties, issues of national interest](#)

What is the importance of India to Bhutan and vice versa?**Importance of India to Bhutan:**

Economic Support: India is Bhutan's largest trading partner and provides significant economic support. For instance, since 2014, India's trade with Bhutan has almost tripled from US\$484 million in 2014-15 to US\$1.42 billion in 2021-22, accounting for about 80 percent of Bhutan's overall trade.

Security: India has been playing a crucial role in ensuring the security of Bhutan. For instance, India's military helps secure Bhutan's borders, and India has helped Bhutan in countering insurgent groups.

Diplomatic Support: India has been a strong diplomatic supporter of Bhutan. India has helped Bhutan in its international engagements, and India's support has been essential in ensuring Bhutan's sovereignty.

Socio-economic development: India has been extending assistance to Bhutan's socio-economic development since the early 1960s, including multi-sectoral project-tied assistance, small development projects, and direct budgetary support.

Importance of Bhutan to India:

Strategic Importance: Bhutan has significant strategic importance for India. Bhutan shares its borders with China, and India considers Bhutan as a buffer state between India and China. For example, China has been offering major concessions on the north in order to obtain a much

smaller territory, which is in Doklam, for years. Bhutan has resisted this offer consistently because it understands India's security concerns and will not decide its border with China without taking into account India's interests.

Strategic ally: Bhutan is a strategic ally for India in the region and provides security assurances to India's northeastern states.

Cultural Ties: Bhutan has deep cultural ties with India. Bhutan's religion, language, and customs are heavily influenced by India's culture. Additionally, Bhutan has been a strong supporter of India's cultural diplomacy.

Hydropower cooperation: Mutually beneficial hydropower cooperation with Bhutan forms the core of bilateral economic cooperation, providing clean power for India and economic prosperity for Bhutan. Hydroelectricity has become one of the biggest revenue earners of Bhutan, which makes Bhutan the country with the highest per capita income in South Asia today.

What are the recent developments in China – Bhutan relations?

Recent Developments in China-Bhutan Relations:

Border Dispute: China and Bhutan have a long-standing border dispute, with China claiming the Doklam plateau as part of its territory, which is also claimed by Bhutan. In 2017, the two countries were involved in a military standoff in the Doklam plateau area, which was resolved after several weeks of tense negotiations.

Diplomatic Relations: Bhutan has been traditionally cautious in its approach towards China and maintains a close relationship with India. However, in recent years, Bhutan has been trying to improve its relations with China, and in 2021, the two countries marked the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Economic Cooperation: China has been providing economic assistance to Bhutan, particularly in the areas of infrastructure development, agriculture, and tourism. In 2020, the two countries signed an agreement to establish a sister city relationship between Xining, the capital of Qinghai province in China, and Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan.

People-to-People Ties: In recent years, there has been an increase in people-to-people ties between China and Bhutan, with more Bhutanese students studying in China and Chinese tourists visiting Bhutan. In 2019, the two countries signed an agreement to promote tourism cooperation.

COVID-19 Pandemic: China has provided medical supplies and equipment to Bhutan to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, Bhutan received a donation of COVID-19 vaccines from China, which were used to vaccinate Bhutanese citizens.

What are the implications of China –Bhutan relations on India?

Strategic implications: China's increasing influence in Bhutan could pose a threat to India's security and strategic interests. It could potentially give China a strategic advantage in the region by encircling India from all sides.

Border implications: Bhutan's border with China is a sensitive issue for India. If China gains more influence in Bhutan, it could lead to territorial disputes between Bhutan and China, which could directly impact India's border security.

Economic implications: China's growing economic influence in Bhutan could impact India's trade and economic interests in the region. It could also lead to China gaining access to Bhutan's natural resources, which could pose a challenge to India's energy security.

Regional implications: China's increasing influence in Bhutan could impact the balance of power in the region. It could lead to a shift in the regional power dynamics and potentially impact India's role in the region.

Diplomatic implications: China's growing influence in Bhutan could impact Bhutan's traditional pro-India foreign policy. This could lead to Bhutan distancing itself from India and

aligning more closely with China, which could have diplomatic implications for India in the region.

What should be done to develop India – Bhutan relations further?

Strengthening Economic Ties: India and Bhutan can work towards enhancing economic cooperation by promoting bilateral trade and investments in various sectors. India can offer technical expertise to Bhutan in developing its infrastructure, tourism industry, and hydropower projects. This can be achieved through joint ventures, the setting up of industries and the signing of free trade agreements.

Address China's concerns: India can try to address some of China's concerns regarding its presence in the region, such as by promoting transparency and dialogue in its engagement with Bhutan and other countries in the neighbourhood.

Resolving Boundary Issues: India and Bhutan should work towards resolving their boundary issues through peaceful means. This will help in maintaining a peaceful border and will enhance the trust and confidence between the two countries.

Use multilateral platforms: India can use multilateral platforms such as the BRICS and the SCO to engage with China on issues related to the region and work towards finding mutually acceptable solutions.

Improving Connectivity: India can help Bhutan in improving its connectivity by providing better road and rail links. This will help in boosting trade and tourism between the two countries.

Enhancing Defense Cooperation: India and Bhutan can work towards enhancing their defense cooperation by increasing the frequency of joint military exercises and training programs. This will help Bhutan in improving its defense capabilities.

Addressing Environmental Concerns: India and Bhutan can collaborate on environmental issues by sharing their knowledge and expertise on sustainable development. India can also help Bhutan in addressing its concerns over climate change and natural disasters.

Promoting People-to-People Contact: To strengthen the cultural bond between the two countries, there should be more exchanges of students, academicians, and cultural groups between India and Bhutan. This will help in promoting mutual understanding and respect between the two countries.

Sources: Economic Times ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), The Hindu ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), [The Print](#), [The Diplomat](#), and [ORF](#)

Syllabus: GS 2: International Relations: India and its Neighbourhood- relations

Supreme Court judgment on Freedom of Press and its significance – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The Supreme Court of India's recent judgment ordered the restoration of the broadcasting license of MediaOne, a Kerala-based television channel. It is considered as a significant victory for the freedom of the press. The ruling has highlighted the mounting political and economic pressures faced by the Indian media and the need for further measures to ensure press freedom.

About the recent SC judgment on Freedom of Press**CJI LED BENCH OF SUPREME COURT CAUTIONS AGAINST INVOKING NATIONAL SECURITY OUT OF THIN AIR TO HURT PRESS FREEDOM**

- SC holds that national security claims can't be made out of thin air, bats in defence of press freedom
- Alert - SC was pronouncing judgment on plea by Kerala Based MediaOne Channel against non-renewal of license
- Alert - Kerala Based MediaOne Channel had applied for license renewal, Ministry of Home Affairs withdrew security clearance citing national security and public order

SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT

- Centre made no attempt to explain how non-disclosure will impact national security
- 'We reminded Centre that mere invocation of national security will not exempt judicial scrutiny'
- National security claims can't be made out of thin air, there has to be a material



Source: CNBC

Read more: [Supreme Court says critical views on government policies not anti-establishment](#)

What are the different views of the Supreme Court on freedom of press in the past?

Romesh Thapar v. State of Madras (1950): The SC held that freedom of speech and expression includes freedom of the press. The Court observed that the press has a significant role to play in informing the public and promoting democratic values. Therefore, any attempt to curtail the freedom of the press would violate the right to freedom of expression.

Brij Bhushan v. State of Delhi (1950): The SC held that freedom of the press cannot be curtailed unless there is an imminent danger to public safety. The Court observed that any attempt to restrain the press must be based on clear and present danger, and not on vague or remote possibilities.

Indian Express Newspapers v. Union of India (1985): The Court emphasized the importance of freedom of the press in these words: "The expression freedom of the press has not been used in Article 19 but it is comprehended within Article 19(1)(a). The expression means freedom from interference from an authority, which would have the effect of interference with the content and circulation of newspapers. There cannot be any interference with that freedom in the name of public interest."

Siddhartha Vashisht v State NCT of Delhi (2010): The court made the important distinction between trial by media and informative media. The case of Sahara vs SEBI is a review of the case law on the point, and it reinforces the line between legitimate comment and usurpation that affects the presumption of innocence.

Manohar Lal Sharma v Union of India, (2021): The SC recognised the link between the Right to Privacy and Freedom of Speech, noting that a breach of privacy can lead to self-censorship. They said that press freedom and privacy were allies and that the fear of surveillance is an 'assault' on the press, which is the fourth pillar of democracy.

Vinod Dua v. Union of India & Others (2021): The SC held that criticism of the government and its policies is not seditious and that the right to free speech and expression extends to the press.

What is the significance of the recent judgment on Freedom of Press?

Upholding the freedom of the press: The Supreme Court's judgment has upheld the freedom of the press as a fundamental right guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. This is significant as it reaffirms the importance of the press as a watchdog of democracy.

Curtailling government overreach: The judgment has put a check on the government's ability to use vague allegations and opaque claims of intelligence-based evidence to restrict the freedom of the press. This is significant as it ensures that the government cannot curtail press freedom at will, and must provide concrete evidence of wrongdoing before taking action.

Setting a precedent for future cases: The judgment sets a precedent for future cases involving press freedom in India. It establishes that journalists and media organizations have the right to access vital evidence the prosecution plans to use, and that critical coverage of the government cannot be deemed unacceptable.

Protecting the rights of journalists: The judgment is significant in that it protects the rights of journalists who have been arrested or censored by the government under the pretext of national security concerns. It ensures that journalists are not unduly targeted or harassed by the state, and that their rights to free speech and expression are protected.

Strengthening democracy: The judgment strengthens democracy in India by ensuring that the press can function as an independent and critical voice. A free and independent press is essential to a functioning democracy, as it holds those in power accountable and enables citizens to make informed decisions

Read here: [Open justice – Supreme Court strikes a blow for both media freedom and fair procedure](#)

How is Freedom of the Press regulated in India?

Constitutional guarantee: The Constitution of India guarantees the **right to freedom of speech and expression 19(1)(a)**, which includes the freedom of the press. This means that the government cannot outrightly ban or censor the media without sufficient cause. **Article 19(2)** provides several reasons to curtail free speech "in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence".

Laws and regulations: However, there are laws and regulations in place that impose restrictions on the media. For example, the **Official Secrets Act, 1923**, allows the government to classify certain information as secret and to punish those who disclose it. Similarly, the **Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867**, requires publishers to register with the government and imposes penalties for non-compliance.

Self-regulatory mechanisms: The media in India is also subject to self-regulatory mechanisms such as the **Press Council of India**. This body oversees the conduct of the press and handles complaints against it. It consists of journalists and representatives from the media industry and is meant to act as a watchdog for the press.

What are the challenges in ensuring Freedom of Press?

Political pressure and censorship: The Indian government has been known to put pressure on the media to report in a certain way, and has been accused of censoring content critical of the government.

Violence against journalists: India has a high rate of violence against journalists, with many cases of physical assault, harassment, and even murder reported each year. For example, in 2017, a journalist was shot and killed outside her home in Bangalore, reportedly for her critical reporting on right-wing politics.

Legal challenges: There are several laws in India that can be used to restrict press freedom, including the Official Secrets Act and defamation laws. Journalists who report on sensitive issues

can face arrest, detention, or other legal action. For example, in 2020, a journalist was arrested and charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for his reporting on the Hathras rape case.

Financial pressures: The media industry in India is subject to financial pressures that can impact its ability to report freely. For example, media outlets may rely on advertising revenue from the government or corporate entities, which can create conflicts of interest and limit their reporting on certain issues.

Misinformation and propaganda: The rise of social media and digital platforms has led to an increase in misinformation and propaganda, which can make it difficult for audiences to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources. This can have a chilling effect on journalists, who may be hesitant to report on sensitive issues for fear of being accused of spreading “fake news.”

What should be done further to ensure Freedom of Press?

Strengthening Legal Protections: The government should review and amend existing laws to ensure that they do not unduly restrict press freedom. There is also a need to enact stronger legal protections for journalists and media outlets, including laws that specifically criminalize violence against journalists.

Promoting Media Pluralism: Steps should be taken to promote media pluralism, including increasing the diversity of ownership, funding models, and content. The government should also support the growth of community and alternative media.

Encouraging Self-Regulation: Media outlets should be encouraged to adopt and adhere to voluntary codes of conduct and ethics. Self-regulation can be effective in promoting responsible journalism and holding media organizations accountable.

Fostering a Culture of Openness: The government should foster a culture of openness and transparency, including by providing greater access to information and data. This can help to promote public trust in the media and the government.

Protecting Whistleblowers: The government should enact stronger protections for whistleblowers who reveal information in the public interest. This can help to ensure that journalists have access to important information and can report on issues of public concern without fear of reprisal.

Supporting Media Literacy: There is a need to promote media literacy among the general public, including by providing education and resources that can help people to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information. This can help to promote a more informed and engaged citizenry.

Sources: [The Hindu](#), Indian Express ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), Times of India ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), [Hindustan Times](#), [The Quint](#) and [The Print](#)

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

Increasing tiger population in India and government initiatives – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

Recently, the Indian Prime Minister marked the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger by putting out a 5th cycle of India’s Tiger Census. Based on the survey, the tiger population in India has grown from 1,411 in 1972 to 3,167 in 2022. The Prime Minister established the **International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA)** to further safeguard these great cats. At the same time, a commemorative coin was made to mark the end of 50 years of “Project Tiger.”

Note: The IBCA will focus on the protection and conservation of seven major big cats of the world — Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Puma, Jaguar, and Cheetah, with membership in the range of countries harbouring these species.

About the recent increase in tiger population in India

PM Narendra Modi releases latest tiger census figures to mark 50 years of completion of Project Tiger



Source: Indian Express

India since 2006 has been conducting scientific tiger population estimation once every four years. According to the latest report, the number of tigers has recorded a 6.74% increase from 2,967 in the last census in 2018 to 3,167 in 2022. The number was 1,411 in 2006.

India is now home to 75% of the global tiger population and also the “largest tiger range country in the world”.

The rate of increase has slowed down to less than 7% over the period, down from more than 30% in the previous four years.

The only landscape in India where the tiger population has gone down is the Western Ghats, where declaring of an ecologically sensitive zone has been hanging since 2010.

The tiger populations have declined in the central Indian states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, even though tigers have been spotted for the first time in Himachal Pradesh and in new areas in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Read more: [Tiger – Endangered Species](#)

What are the reasons led to the increasing tiger population in India?

Conservation Efforts: India has implemented various conservation efforts to protect tigers, including the establishment of protected areas, anti-poaching patrols, and community involvement. For example, Project Tiger was launched in 1973 to protect tigers and their habitats, and it has led to an increase in tiger populations in many areas.

Habitat Restoration: The restoration of tiger habitat has been a key factor in their population recovery. Efforts have been made to reduce human encroachment and restore natural habitats by reforestation and reducing deforestation. For instance, in Sariska Tiger Reserve, where tigers were once completely wiped out, efforts have been made to restore the habitat and reintroduce tigers.

Strict laws against poaching: India has implemented strict laws against poaching and the illegal trade of tiger parts. This has reduced the number of tigers killed for their skin, bones, and other body parts.

Prey Base Management: Managing the prey base for tigers is important to ensure their survival. The increase in prey populations, such as deer and wild boar, has resulted in a rise in tiger numbers. Efforts are being made to improve the prey base by managing their populations and reducing their hunting by humans.

Reduced Human-Tiger Conflict: Human-tiger conflict has been a significant threat to tiger populations. Measures to reduce such conflicts, such as building barriers, compensation for livestock losses, and relocation of problematic tigers, have helped to prevent the loss of tigers due to human-wildlife conflict.

What is the significance of conserving the tiger population?

Ecological importance: Tigers are apex predators in their ecosystem, and their presence helps maintain a balance in the food chain. Their conservation ensures the protection of other species and their habitats, contributing to overall ecosystem health.

Economic benefits: The presence of tigers in protected areas attracts tourists from around the world, generating significant revenue for local communities and governments. Tiger conservation can also create employment opportunities in ecotourism and related industries.

Cultural and spiritual significance: Tigers hold a special place in many cultures and religions, and are often considered symbols of power, strength, and beauty. Conserving tigers help preserve cultural and spiritual heritage for future generations.

Genetic diversity: Tigers are a genetically diverse species, with distinct subspecies found in different regions of the world. Conserving tiger populations helps preserve this genetic diversity, which can be important for the long-term survival of the species.

Climate change adaptation: Tigers require large areas of intact forest habitat to survive, which also provides important ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and water regulation. Conserving tiger habitats can help mitigate the effects of climate change by preserving these important ecological functions.

Scientific Research: Tigers are a keystone species and their conservation can provide valuable insights into ecological processes and conservation biology. Studying tiger behaviour and their interactions with other species can help in developing effective conservation strategies for other species and ecosystems.

Read more: [Explained: How many tigers are too many](#)

What are the government initiatives focused on improving the tiger population in India?

Project Tiger: The 'Project Tiger' is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, providing funding support to tiger range States for in-situ conservation of tigers in designated tiger reserves, and has put the endangered tiger on an assured path of recovery by saving it from extinction, as revealed by the recent findings of the All India tiger estimation using the refined methodology.

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA): It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act. It works closely with state governments and other stakeholders to implement various measures for the protection and management of tiger reserves.

Tiger Census: The government conducts a national tiger census every four years to estimate the tiger population in the country.

Community Reserves: The government has also established Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves to protect critical tiger habitats outside of the designated tiger reserves. These reserves are managed by local communities and provide alternative livelihoods to local people while conserving the tiger population.

Eco-Sensitive Zones: The government has declared several areas around tiger reserves as Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) to protect the biodiversity of these areas. Eco Sensitive Zones act as some kind of "shock absorbers" to the Protected Areas by prohibiting, regulating and promoting activities around Protected Areas.

Project Elephant: While this is not directly related to tigers, Project Elephant was launched in 1992 to protect the elephant population in the country. As elephants and tigers share similar habitats, the initiative has indirectly benefited tiger populations as well. The project aims to protect elephant corridors and habitats, prevent poaching, and mitigate human-elephant conflicts.

Global Tiger Forum(GTF): It is the inter-governmental international body established in 1993 with members from willing countries to embark on a global campaign to protect the Tiger. It is located in New Delhi, India.

Global Tiger Initiative(GTI): It was launched in 2008 as a global alliance of governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector with the aim of working together to save wild tigers from extinction. In 2013, the scope was broadened to include Snow Leopards.

Read more: [Tiger Reserves in India \(Updated 2023\)](#)

What are the challenges with the increased tiger population in India?

With the increased tiger population there are a few challenges also. These include,

Firstly, with the increase in India's human population, the natural habitat of tigers has been gradually destroyed. Consequently, there is a higher likelihood of encounters between humans and tigers as the tiger population expands. Managing man-animal conflict at socially and economically tolerable limits will be challenging.

Secondly, there is a carrying capacity of tiger reserves that can support tigers. Few of the tiger reserves in India are already on the threshold of it.

Thirdly, the population of tigers is dependent on the prey population, which means that for the tiger population to increase sustainably, there must be a corresponding increase in the prey population.

Fourthly, there is a lack of corridors which connect adjacent tiger reserves. These are crucial for the long-term viability of individual tiger populations. But these corridors often pass through unprotected government and private lands.

Read more: [What numbers do not reveal about tiger conservation](#)

What more can be done?

Habitat Restoration: Restoration of the remaining tiger habitat with a prey base is essential before tigers can occupy it. Prey base in the habitats of states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and North Eastern States of Arunachal, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Assam should be restored.

Construction of Corridors for Gene Pool: Habitat linkages in the form of corridors to form metapopulations by connecting these Tiger Reserves is a vital strategy for long-term viability of individual tiger populations. These corridors often pass through unprotected government and private lands. Infrastructure passing through corridor habitats needs to be mitigated appropriately and land conversions monitored through a legal mechanism to ensure that there is no barrier effect to the movement of tigers.

Conflict Management: Managing the man-animal conflict is easier to achieve in India, where religious and cultural values permit some of the highest levels of tolerance amongst human societies. Sharing revenues from tiger reserves with communities residing in the buffer zone and corridor habitats, compensating for all damage at market rates, and removing problem tigers immediately would prevent a backlash against the species.

Need genetic rescue plan: India should carry a genetic rescue plan or even the introduction of novel genetic variants using genome sequencing technology.

Monitoring: Proper monitoring of tiger populations and their habitats is important to track the success of conservation efforts.

Education and Awareness: Education and awareness campaigns can help in changing people's attitudes towards tigers and their conservation.

Government Support: The government needs to provide adequate funding for conservation efforts and ensure that laws and regulations related to wildlife conservation are strictly enforced.

Curbing Illegal Trade: Illegal trade in tiger parts and products needs to be curbed through strict law enforcement and awareness campaigns.

Involve Local Communities: Involving local communities in conservation efforts and providing them with alternative livelihood options can help reduce the pressure on forests and wildlife.

International Cooperation: International cooperation and collaboration are necessary to address issues such as habitat loss, poaching, and illegal trade, which are global in nature.

Sources: [The Hindu](#), [Indian Express](#), [Livemint](#), [Times of India](#), [Hindustan Times](#), and [India Today](#)

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

Amendment to IT Rules and regulating fake news – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023, which are an amendment to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital

Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. The Amendment to IT Rules has generated intense debate, with some arguing that they could curtail freedom of speech and expression online, while others believe that they are necessary to prevent the spread of fake news and other harmful content.

About the recent Amendment to IT Rules

SOCIAL MEDIA	DIGITAL MEDIA & OTT PLATFORMS
<p>Rules Seek To Empower Users Of Digital Platforms & Ensure Accountability</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1] Tighter timelines to take down unlawful content, assist law enforcement 2] Identify first originator of a message that causes identified offence 3] Stricter rules for bigger platforms, including local presence 4] Voluntary user verification mechanism 	<p>Seek to address concerns over digital content through....</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1] Self regulation & self-classification of content – universal, adult etc 2] Code of ethics – To follow prescribed guidelines 3] Three-tier grievance redressal mechanism 4] Subjects digital news media to same laws as traditional media
<p>IN CASE OF NON COMPLIANCE...</p>	
<p>Intermediary will lose its safe harbour from user content</p>	<p>Liable to punishment under IT Act or IPC</p>

Source: Economic Times

Introduction of Fact-Check Bodies: The recent amendment to IT Rules introduces the creation of fact-check bodies to identify whether information related to the Central government is accurate or not.

Regulation of Social Media Intermediaries: The new amendments also regulate social media intermediaries like Facebook and Twitter to take down posts and internet service providers to block URLs marked as fake, failure to do so could lead to social media platforms losing safe harbor protections.

Identification and Removal of Fake News: The amendment aims to identify and remove fake news to prevent its spread, especially during tumultuous times where it can incite violence and cause panic.

Ensuring Accountability of Online Platforms: The amendment seeks to ensure accountability of online platforms by requiring them to follow a code of ethics and take measures to prevent the misuse of their platforms.

Addressing National Security Concerns: The amendment aims to address national security concerns by allowing the government to take down online content that threatens the sovereignty and integrity of India.

Providing a Legal Framework for Tech Regulation: The amendment provides a legal framework for tech regulation and clarifies the responsibilities of online platforms, social media intermediaries, and the government in regulating online content.

Read more: [IT Ministry notifies body to flag 'fake' content about govt](#)

What is the rationale behind the recent amendment to IT Rules?

The recent amendment to IT Rules aims to regulate social media platforms, online news publishers, and other digital media outlets.

Regulating Fake News: One of the primary reasons behind the amendment is to regulate the spread of fake news and misinformation through social media platforms and other digital media outlets. For instance, recently, a malicious disinformation campaign led to law-and-order issues in Tamil Nadu. The news spread false claims about violence against migrant workers from Bihar and was propagated through social media.

Non-liability of Intermediaries: Section 79 of the IT Act states that an intermediary (Digital media and OTTs) shall not be liable for any third party information, data, or communication

shared on their platforms. They enjoy a safe harbour regime. This has been used to escape accountability or legal ramifications for content on these platforms.

Amount of Internet users in the country: The internet in India has expanded significantly, making us the world's largest connected democracy with over 83 crore people online. Every Indian will be on the Internet by 2025. The internet is now a space for user harm, misinformation and toxicity that has outpaced good innovation. Hence, without proper regulation, the information going on them might trigger national security issues and other challenges.

Must read: [Controlling Fake News in India and associated challenges - Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the advantages of amendment to IT Rules?

The amendments to the IT Rules bring some advantages, including:

Addressing the issue of fake news: The creation of a fact-checking body can help to address the issue of fake news and misinformation on online platforms, which can potentially cause harm to society.

Improved accountability: The amendments provide for increased accountability of social media intermediaries, which are required to remove content marked as fake or misleading. This can help to prevent the spread of harmful content and ensure that intermediaries are more responsible for the content on their platforms.

Protection of citizens' rights: The rules provide for an appeals process for citizens who feel that their content has been wrongly flagged as fake or misleading, ensuring that their rights to freedom of speech and expression are protected.

Cybersecurity: The rules provide for the mandatory appointment of a chief compliance officer, a nodal contact person, and a resident grievance officer by social media intermediaries. This can help to improve cybersecurity and prevent the misuse of online platforms for illegal or harmful activities.

Ensuring Compliance: It seeks to ensure compliance with Indian laws, including those related to national security and public order. This helps to prevent the misuse of social media platforms and other digital media outlets to incite violence or spread hate speech.

Promoting Self-Regulation: Finally, it aims to promote self-regulation among social media platforms and other digital media outlets. This encourages these platforms to take proactive measures to prevent the spread of fake news and other malicious content, rather than waiting for the government to take action.

What are the challenges associated with the amendment to IT Rules?

Some of the challenges associated with the amendment:

Lack of clarity on what constitutes "fake or false or misleading" information: The amendment does not provide a clear definition of what types of information qualify as "fake or false or misleading." This lack of clarity creates ambiguity and can lead to arbitrary censorship by the government.

Censorship and Freedom of Speech: The fact-check unit of the central government has been given unprecedented power to censor any content that they deem to be fake or false or misleading, which could potentially infringe upon the freedom of speech and expression of citizens.

Lack of transparency and accountability: The proposed amendments do not provide any criteria or guidelines for the government to declare information as 'fake' or 'false', leading to potential misuse of power. Moreover, the lack of due process, notice and hearing for the originators and creators of information may lead to arbitrary takedowns and a lack of accountability.

Burden on intermediaries: The proposed amendments increase the compliance burden on intermediaries, who may have to take down content based on government orders without any clarity on the criteria for declaring information as 'fake' or 'false'. The additional layer of censorship through the Grievance Appellate Committees may further increase the burden on intermediaries.

Impact on digital media and online news portals: The proposed amendments do not apply directly to news websites, which are not classified as intermediaries. This may lead to differential treatment of news websites and other online platforms, and potential challenges to the independence of digital media.

Constitutional concerns: Some critics argue that the fact-checking powers granted to the government under the IT Rules, 2023 may infringe on the constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India.

Short-circuiting established legal procedures: The amendments short-circuit a) The procedures, safeguards and conditions laid out in *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India* or under Section 69A of the IT Act, b) Madras High Court ruling in *T M Krishna v. Union of India* and the Bombay High Court ruling in *Agij Promotion of Nineteen One Media Pvt. Ltd. & Ors. v. Union of India* put a hold on the rules which provided the government with a wider say on content on OTT or digital media platforms.

Chilling Effect: The mere existence of the fact-check unit and its power to censor content could have a chilling effect on free speech, as people may be hesitant to express their opinions online for fear of being censored or facing legal consequences.

Potential for Misuse: The fact-check unit's power could be misused by the government to silence dissenting voices or criticism of government actions, which could have serious implications for democracy and human rights.

Opposition from civil society and media organizations: The Editors Guild, the Indian Newspaper Society, and other civil society and media organizations have spoken out against the amendment, stating that the determination of "fake news" should not be in the sole hands of the government and that it could allow the government to proscribe any criticism of its actions.

Conflict of interest: The role played by the fact-checking unit has a significant conflict of interest as it plays the role of judge, jury and executioner.

Read more: [Express View on IT Rules amendments: Government sets itself up as judge, jury and executioner](#)

What should be done?

Need develop a more transparent and participatory process: The government should work with civil society, media organizations, and other stakeholders to develop a more transparent and participatory process for determining what content should be considered fake or misleading.

Need an independent and non-partisan fact-checking body: The government should ensure that anybody tasked with fact-checking is independent and non-partisan, with clear guidelines for how decisions are made.

According to judicial guidelines: The government should ensure that any takedown requests are made in accordance with the procedures and safeguards laid out in *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India* or under Section 69A of the IT Act, which defines and restrict the conditions under which government can take down online content.

Need to find a balanced approach: The government should engage in dialogue with social media platforms and other intermediaries to find a balanced approach to tackling fake news and misinformation, which takes into account the need to protect freedom of expression and the rights of media organizations, journalists, and readers.

Need regularly reviewed and updated: The government should also ensure that any regulations or guidelines are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the evolving nature of online content and the challenges associated with regulating it.

Source: Indian Express ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), [The Hindu](#), [Livewall](#), [The Times of India](#), [Hindustan Times](#) and [The Wire](#)

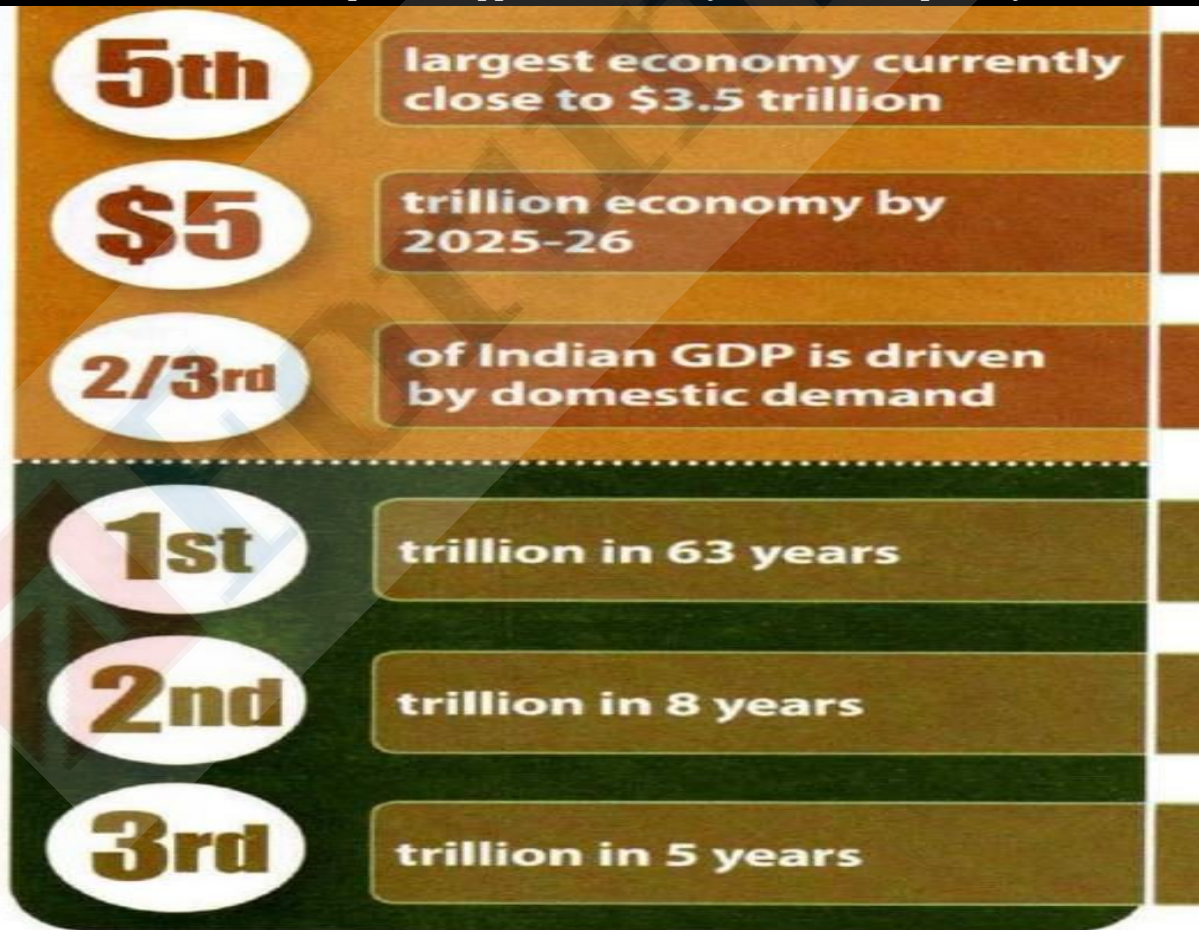
Syllabus: GS 3: Security Issues – role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

[Yojana April 2023 Summary] Opportunities for Youth in Startup Ecosystem – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

India is celebrating its 75th anniversary as the world’s youngest and largest democracy. The Prime Minister has set a goal of making India a developed nation by 2047, and the next 25 years have been dubbed “Amrit Kaal.” This period will usher in the Swarnim Yug, which would see India become a developed nation by 2047. Providing opportunities for Youth will be crucial in accomplishing this goal. The government is enacting several programmes to fully realise their potential. With a billion Indians under the age of 35, India’s demographic dividend is set to provide the country with a bright future.

Why does New India need to provide opportunities for youth in Startup Ecosystem?



Source: Yojana

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Startups Catering to Market Demands: The Indian domestic market and demand is projected to reach an enormous \$384 trillion by 2047. India's villages currently house 11% of the world's population, but around 30 people are moving from villages to cities every minute. By 2047, 20% of the world's middle class will be in India, creating a new urban population that will require various services such as housing, infrastructure, education, health, and entertainment. Young entrepreneurs have a vast range of sectors to innovate in and meet the growing demand, offering tremendous opportunities for startups to disrupt the market positively.

India's Rapid Digitisation: India is at the forefront of digitisation, with 41 percent of the world's real-time transactions occurring in the country. The IT industry in India is booming, with a YoY growth of 15.5 percent in FY22 and revenue surpassing USD 200 billion. Startups have the opportunity to leverage the development in tech sub-sectors like AI, blockchain, XaaS, cloud computing, and more. The Government of India is committed to promoting homegrown businesses and supporting Indian innovators in emerging as global leaders in futuristic technology.

Record FDI and Inclusive Growth: Out of the \$950 billion in FDI received since independence, \$532 billion came in the last 8 years from 162 countries in 61 sectors across 31 states and UTs. The Digital India initiative has helped drive the growth of the startup ecosystem, especially in remote parts of the nation. The 'MARG' portal is providing crucial opportunities and funding for innovators and startups in remote areas, highlighting inclusive development in New India. The new engine of the Indian growth story lies in semi-urban and rural India.

India-Knowledge and content hub of the world: Along with sports, our yoga-spirituality, music cinema, and philosophy-literature, etc., also have the power to establish Indian hegemony in the whole world. Today, India's Yoga Day and International Millets Day are the most popular among the programmes celebrated by the United Nations. So, India must develop ways of fully leveraging the potential of Indian soft power through startups also.

Opportunities in energy sector: India holds the fourth position in the world, in the field of solar energy. The recently-discovered lithium deposits in Jammu and Kashmir are also likely to open up new opportunities. The energy sector promises guaranteed success and must be leveraged by the youth and startups so that India can become self-sufficient and a net exporter nation of energy by 2047.

What are the steps taken by the government to enhance the opportunities for Youth in Startup Ecosystem?



Source: Yojana

Startup India acts as a Catalyst for India's Youth: Startup India has been a decisive and phenomenal intervention by the Government of India to make India's youth the best in the world. Launched in 2016, it has become a globally known journey of India's fast-paced, always innovating and resilient entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Through Startup India, the youth have been given access to new opportunities and empowered to drive India's sustainable economic growth and create large-scale employment opportunities. This has transformed India into a New India where good economics is driving much-needed change.

Working towards digitizing: The Union Budget 2023-24 aims to transform India into a scientific and digitized economy. The government is working towards digitizing all government processes to make them more citizen-centric.

Green Hydrogen Mission: There is a provision of Rs. 35,000 crores for the energy transition in this budget. Rs. 20,000 crore have been given for the Green Hydrogen Mission. Agricultural

startups: The Agricultural Budget which was less than Rs. 25,000 crores in 2014 has been increased to more than Rs. 1,25,000 crore today.

India is home to more than 3000 agri-startups today compared to almost nothing 9 years ago. The introduction of accelerator funds for agri-tech startups is not only creating digital infrastructure but also preparing funding avenues. Shree Anna is being promoted for the benefit of our small farmers as well as to increase the growth possibilities of startups in this sector.

Lowering the cost of logistics to increase competitiveness: The [National Logistics Policy \(NLP\)](#), launched in September 2022, aims to lower the cost of logistics and increase the competitiveness of Indian products. The policy targets reducing the cost of logistics from the existing range of 13%-14% to levels on par with other developed countries.

Combining Policies: The NLP's transformational capacities are further increased when combined with previous connectivity and infrastructure improvement schemes like Gati Shakti, Sagarmala, and Bharatmala. This synergy will further increase the efficiency efforts across all sectors of the economy and encourage value addition and enterprise.

How does the Knowledge-Based Digital Economy provide opportunities for youth in the startup ecosystem?

Building a knowledge-based digital economy: A Digital Public Infrastructure will be developed for the benefit of farmers, while ICMR labs will be made available to private medical colleges and R&D companies for health-based research. Additionally, a Centre of Excellence will be set up to promote research and innovation in pharmaceuticals. District Institutes of Education and Training Centres will also be established to revolutionize teacher training, and a National Digital Library will be built.

Focus on skill development and training: The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana will provide training in artificial intelligence, coding, 3D printing, and the Internet of Things. The government will open 30 Skill India international centers, three Centers of Excellence for Artificial Intelligence, and 100 labs for the development of 5G applications. Moreover, stipends will be given to 47 lakh youth to ensure equal opportunities for everyone.

Introducing the National Data Governance Policy: To facilitate the use of data arising from digitization, the government will soon introduce the National Data Governance Policy. This policy will make India's data available to the country's youth to develop new technologies and innovations.

How do sectors of defence and space provide opportunities for Youth in Startup Ecosystem?

India's Defence Exports: India's defence exports have been growing steadily over the past few years, with the goal of raising them from \$1.5 billion to \$5 billion by 2024-25.

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) Framework: To promote innovation and technological growth in the defence and aerospace sectors, the government established the Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework. This framework integrates industries such as MSMEs, startups, and individual innovators, as well as R&D institutes and academia, to promote self-sufficiency.

Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC): The iDEX framework launched seven versions of the Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC) to encourage startups and inventors to develop successful prototypes. The Military India Startup Challenge has seen a huge number of firms participate in various rounds.

Success Stories of iDEX Framework: So far, 136 startups have been engaged, and 102 contracts for prototype development have been signed. The Ministry has also granted Acceptance of Necessity (AN) for 14 iDEX goods, opening the door for orders to be placed with iDEX winners.

Central Sector Scheme for iDEX: The government has authorised a central sector scheme for iDEX with a financial support of Rs 498.78 crore from 2021-22 to 2025-26. The problem statements generated by the defence forces are launched within the iDEX framework for the development of technologies and prototypes, thereby addressing the defence forces' real-time problems.

Conclusion

The youth of India are being praised for their innovative spirit, which has led to the success of the country's startup ecosystem. The Prime Minister has recognized their passion, sincerity, and integrity as the driving force behind this success. India's startups are constantly evolving and adapting, which is why they are creating waves in the world. Young entrepreneurs are encouraged to continue playing and exploring new opportunities while upholding the spirit of Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam.

Source: Yojana

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

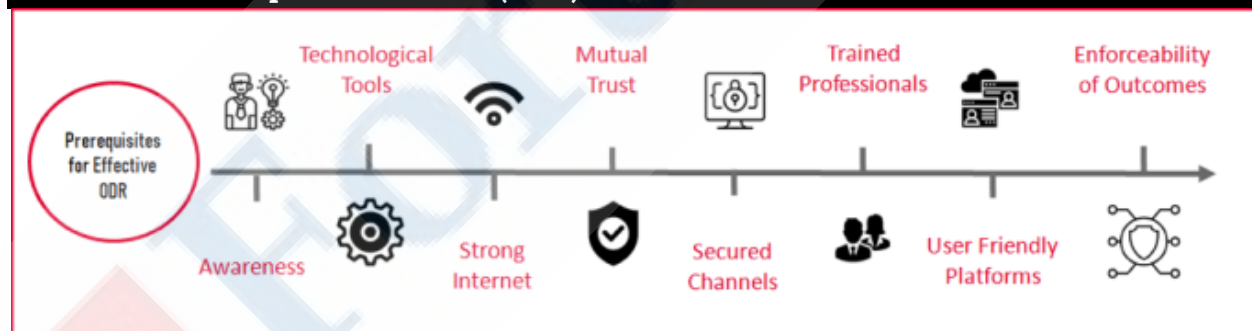
Online Dispute Resolution (ODR): Need and Significance – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

India's growth in international arbitration has been slow despite opening up its economy in the 1990s. At the Delhi Arbitration Weekend in February 2023, the Union Law Minister emphasised the need for institutional arbitration to enhance the ease of doing business.

However, India's low ranking in 'Enforcing Contracts' shows it still has a long way to go in becoming an international arbitration hub. Nonetheless, India can catch up with the trend of Online Dispute Redressal (ODR) and make progress in enhancing the ease of doing business.

What is Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)?



Source: The Print

ODR arose from the combination of ADR and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) of the digital era. It uses technology to help people resolve their disputes in an easier and more efficient way than traditional methods.

It is similar to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) but uses tools like multichannel communication, case management systems, and digital signatures. ODR also incorporates advanced technologies like blockchain, natural language processing, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. It goes beyond just audio/video conferencing and is designed to streamline the entire dispute resolution process.

About Online Dispute Resolution worldwide

Several international organizations such as United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), Organization for Economic CoOperation and Development (OECD), International Mediation Institute (IMI), and the International ODR Forum have been working towards the development of ODR globally. The European Union, USA, Australia, Singapore, and China have also taken steps to implement ODR for consumer disputes. The Beijing court is notable for its use of AI in dispute resolution.

What is the need for Online Dispute Resolution in India?

Increasing caseload and backlog in courts: The need for online dispute resolution stems from the fact that India has a huge backlog of court cases, which is only increasing with time. For instance, As of March 2022, there are 4.70 crore cases pending across courts in India. More than 70,000 of those are pending in the Supreme Court. 40 per cent of these have been pending for more than five years. This backlog leads to delayed justice, which in turn erodes public confidence in the judiciary. ODR can help alleviate this problem by providing an alternative and efficient way of resolving disputes.

Number of digital interactions and transactions increased so did the number of disputes: According to a report, India currently has around 350 million online transacting users across e-commerce, shopping, travel and hospitality, and OTT and the number is set to double by 2030. In this scenario, disputes were bound to outpace resolutions without a technology-infused effective mechanism in place. ODR can provide a convenient and efficient option for resolving disputes.

Lack of access to justice for remote and underprivileged communities: Many people in India, especially those living in remote areas or belonging to underprivileged communities, do not have easy access to justice. They may face multiple barriers such as high travel costs, lack of transportation, and language barriers. ODR can help overcome these barriers by providing a platform for parties to resolve their disputes without the need for physical travel.

Need for a cost-effective dispute resolution mechanism: Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, such as going to court, can be expensive and time-consuming. For many people, the cost of litigation is a significant barrier to accessing justice. ODR provides a cost effective alternative by reducing the need for physical infrastructure and legal representation, thereby lowering the cost of the dispute resolution process.

Formal and rigid Judiciary: Traditional court proceedings can be formal and rigid, making it difficult for people to represent themselves or to reach an agreement. Online dispute resolution can provide a more informal and flexible process, making it easier for people to resolve disputes. For example, a couple going through a divorce in India can use ODR to reach a settlement without having to go through the formal and often intimidating court process.

Privacy and confidentiality: Some disputes, such as family or workplace disputes, may require privacy and confidentiality. Online dispute resolution can provide a secure platform for resolving such disputes. For example, a woman in India who has been sexually harassed by a colleague can use an ODR platform to resolve the dispute privately and confidentially.

What are the various initiatives taken in India to promote ODR?

What is ODR?

A way to settle disputes outside courts, combining tech and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms

Why is It Useful?

Can ease pressure on courts

4.56 million

Pending cases in high courts

31.5 million

Pending cases in district courts

350,000

Backlog in top 5 central tribunals

(Source: National Judicial Data Grid, Law Commission report)

Source: NLS

Government Initiatives:

National Centre for Dispute Resolution: The Ministry of Law and Justice has established the National Centre for Dispute Resolution (NCDR) to promote alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including ODR.

The Online Consumer Mediation Centre (OCMC): It is established at NLSIU, Bengaluru, under the aegis of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs in 2016. The Centre aims to provide for a state-of-the-art infrastructure for resolving consumer disputes both through physical as well as online mediation through its platform.

Digital India: The government's flagship program, Digital India, aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. ODR is a key component of this program.

SAMADHAAN portal: It aims to address the delay of payment disputes involving Micro and Small Enterprises by the Ministry of MSME in 2018.

National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI): The concept of ODR was introduced into the Indian judicial system as early as 2006 when the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) was adopted. This was done under the Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (INDRP). The policy dictated dispute resolution based on written complaints submitted online regarding registration and use of .in Domain Name. The procedure provided an effective way for an out-of-court settlement.

The e-Courts Integrated Mission Mode Project: The Government of India has launched the e-Courts Integrated Mission Mode Project in the country for the computerization of District and subordinate courts with the objective of improving access to justice using technology.

e- Lok Adalat: During the Covid-19 pandemic, Chhattisgarh state high court organized the nation's first state-level e-Lok Adalat and resolved cases through mutual agreement through video conferencing.

Private initiatives:

E-Alternate Dispute Resolution (E-ADR) Challenge: Technologists, legal experts, and social and business leaders together launched E-ADR Challenge in 2019. The objective of this challenge was to welcome innovation to the field of law and build an ADR platform that could accelerate the process of dispute resolution with the help of advanced technology.

Private companies and platforms have taken the lead in providing ODR services in India. Some of the popular ODR platforms in India include **ODRways, Presolv360, and SAMA.**

What are the recommendations given by the NITI Aayog report titled 'Designing the Future of Dispute Resolution'?

Read here: [NITI Aayog Pushes for Online Dispute Resolution for Speedy Access to Justice](#)

What are the advantages of Online Dispute Resolution?

Convenience: ODR allows parties to resolve disputes from anywhere, anytime, and without the need for physical presence. This is particularly useful for parties who are geographically dispersed or unable to travel due to health or financial reasons.

Cost-effective: ODR is often more affordable than traditional methods of dispute resolution, as it eliminates the need for travel, lodging, and other related expenses.

Time-efficient: ODR can often lead to faster resolution of disputes compared to traditional methods. With ODR, parties can avoid lengthy court proceedings and settle their disputes in a matter of days or weeks.

Increased access to justice: ODR makes dispute resolution accessible to a wider range of people, including those who are economically or socially disadvantaged. It also eliminates barriers to justice, such as language and literacy issues, by offering translation and other support services.

Improved confidentiality: ODR provides a more private and confidential environment for parties to resolve their disputes, as it eliminates the need for public court proceedings and allows for secure communication channels.

Sustainability: ODR is often more sustainable than traditional methods of dispute resolution, as it reduces the need for paper-based documentation and travel-related emissions.

What are the challenges in developing effective Online Dispute Resolution?

Lack of awareness: One of the significant challenges in developing effective ODR systems is a lack of awareness among the general public about the existence and benefits of these systems.

Technical difficulties: ODR systems rely heavily on technology and require robust infrastructure to ensure their smooth functioning. Technical difficulties such as slow internet connections, system crashes, and other technical glitches can significantly hinder the effectiveness of ODR.

Security concerns: Confidentiality and security are major concerns in ODR as sensitive information is shared electronically. It is vital to ensure that ODR systems are secure and tamper-proof, and information exchanged between parties is protected.

Cultural and linguistic differences: ODR systems must be sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences. Language barriers and cultural differences can make it challenging to resolve disputes in an online setting effectively.

Legal framework: There is a lack of a comprehensive legal framework for ODR in India, which can create confusion and uncertainty for both parties in a dispute.

Trust issues: Many people may not trust ODR platforms and prefer to resolve disputes through traditional methods like courts and tribunals.

Accessibility issue: ODR platforms may not be accessible to people with disabilities or those who lack digital literacy.

Implementation issue: Even if ODR platforms are developed, there may be challenges in their implementation due to resistance from traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, lack of trained mediators, and the need for continuous technological updates.

What should be done?

Simplify the process: The ODR process must be simplified so that it is easily accessible and understandable to people. The language used in online platforms should be simple and clear.

Enhance infrastructure: The government can invest in better infrastructure to improve the ODR platform's performance, speed, and security. This can increase people's trust in the system and encourage them to use it more frequently.

Encourage participation: The government can introduce incentives for parties to participate in the ODR process, such as reduced fees or faster resolution times. This can help increase the number of cases being resolved through ODR.

Develop specialized platforms: Specialized ODR platforms can be developed for different sectors such as e-commerce, insurance, banking, and so on. This will ensure that the ODR process is tailored to the specific needs of each sector.

Expand ODR to more sectors: ODR can be extended to more sectors such as real estate, labor, and family disputes. This will enable people to resolve disputes quickly and efficiently without having to go through lengthy court procedures.

Collaborate with other countries: The Indian government can collaborate with other countries to develop ODR infrastructure, exchange knowledge and expertise, and enhance cross-border ODR mechanisms.

Sources: The Hindu ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), [Deccan Chronicle](#), [Times Of India](#) and [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 2: Governance – Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential.

Mudra Scheme: performance and significance – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) was launched by the Indian government eight years ago to provide financial support and encourage self-employment among micro and small-sized enterprises. These businesses make up a significant part of India's economy and the scheme has played a crucial role in empowering individuals and supporting their growth. However, despite its success, the PMMY still faces some challenges that need to be addressed.

About Mudra Scheme

Mudra Loan

Eligibility Criteria



- › **Age**
Minimum 18 years &
Maximum 65 years
- › **Loan Amount**
Maximum up to
Rs. 10 lakh
- › **Eligible Entities**
Individuals, Startups,
Artisans, Small Vendors,
Shopkeepers, Retailers,
Manufacturers & MSMEs
- › **Indian Citizen with No
Criminal Records**
- › **Eligible Enterprises**
Pvt. & Public Ltd. Companies,
Sole Proprietorship,
Partnerships, LLPs, NGOs, Trusts
& Co-operative Societies
- › **Availed By**
All Non-Farm Enterprises -
Engaged in only Trading, Services
and Manufacturing sectors
- › **Applicants**
With No previous Defaults
with any bank

paisabazaar

Source: paisabazaar

Read here: [Cabinet approves 2% interest subvention for Shishu-Mudra loans](#)

What is the need for Mudra Scheme?

Lack of access to formal credit: Many small businesses and entrepreneurs in India face challenges in accessing credit from formal financial institutions due to factors such as lack of collateral or credit history. The Mudra Scheme aims to address this issue by providing collateral-free loans to small businesses and first-time borrowers.

Financial exclusion: Many individuals in India, particularly those in rural or underserved areas, lack access to formal financial institutions. The Mudra Scheme can help promote financial inclusion by providing loans to individuals and businesses who may not have access to traditional sources of credit.

Unemployment: Small businesses are a significant source of employment in India, but many struggle to grow and create jobs due to a lack of access to credit. The Mudra Scheme can potentially help address this issue by providing loans to small businesses, enabling them to invest in their businesses and create more jobs.

Gender inequality: Women entrepreneurs often face significant challenges in accessing credit in India due to factors such as lack of collateral or social norms. The Mudra Scheme has a special

focus on supporting women entrepreneurs, providing collateral-free loans and promoting greater gender equality in the economy.

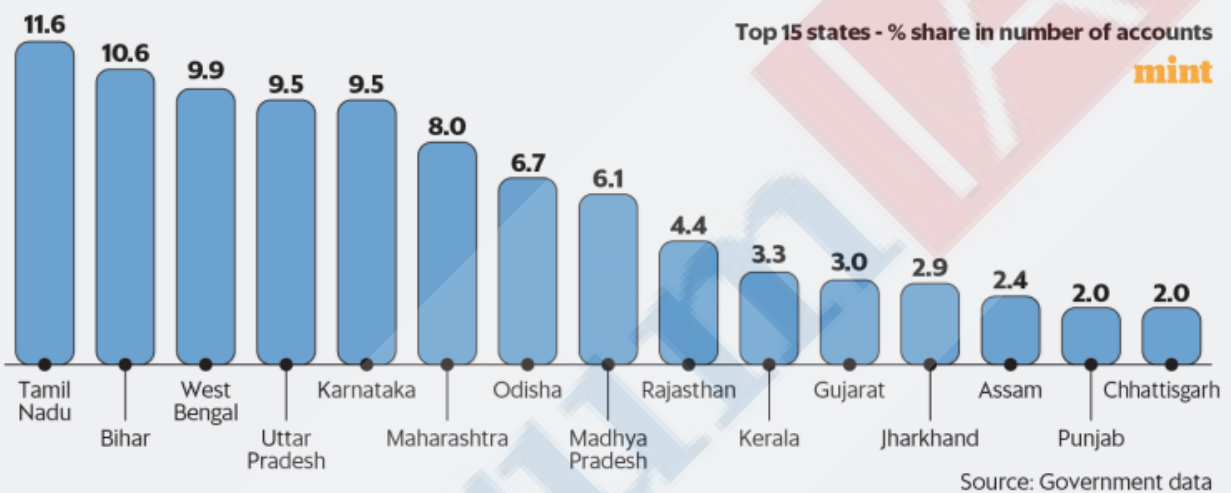
Lack of collateral: Many small businesses and entrepreneurs may not have sufficient collateral to secure loans, making it difficult for them to access loans. This issue can be addressed by mudra Scheme

Economic growth: Small businesses are a key driver of economic growth and innovation, but many struggle to access the capital they need to grow and expand. The Mudra Scheme aims to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation by providing loans to first-time borrowers and start-ups, enabling them to pursue their business ideas and contribute to the economy.

What is the performance of the Mudra Scheme?

Fairly even spread

Mudra loans display a reasonably good distribution across India's states.



Source: Livemint

According to the government, approximately 40.82 crores in loans totalling \$23.2 trillion have been sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) since its start eight years ago. About 68% of accounts under the scheme belong to women entrepreneurs and 51% of accounts belong to entrepreneurs of SC, ST and OBC categories.

The average ticket size for Mudra loans obtained by customers from banks and other financial institutions is less than Rs 50,000. The share of Shishu loans is the highest, at 40%, suggesting that the PMMY has largely supported first-time entrepreneurs.

Must Read: [Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana: Credit saturation for livelihoods](#)

What are the challenges associated with Mudra Scheme highlighted by experts?

While the scheme has been successful in providing loans to a large number of beneficiaries, there have been some challenges associated with it. Some of the challenges highlighted by experts include:

Targeting beneficiaries: One of the key challenges of the Mudra Scheme is the targeting of beneficiaries. There is a concern that the benefits of the scheme are not reaching the intended target group, which are small and micro enterprises, especially those run by women, SC/ST, and other marginalized communities.

Non-performing assets (NPAs): There is a concern that the Mudra Scheme may lead to a rise in non-performing assets (NPAs) in the banking system as the scheme offers collateral-free loans to small and micro enterprises. This can lead to a high default rate and NPAs.

For example, In July 2019, the RBI blamed the poor credit appraisal system of banks for rising bad debts. The biggest bad loans (12.39 per cent) were in the smallest loan category (under ₹50,000).

Lack of financial literacy: Many of the beneficiaries of the Mudra Scheme are first-time borrowers, and they may not have the necessary financial literacy to manage their loans effectively. This can lead to defaults and NPAs.

Inadequate monitoring: Experts have pointed out that there is inadequate monitoring of the implementation of the Mudra Scheme. This can lead to leakages and misuse of funds, which can undermine the effectiveness of the scheme.

Lack of credit guarantee: The Mudra Scheme does not provide credit guarantee to the banks that lend under the scheme. This can lead to a reluctance among banks to lend to small and micro enterprises.

Read More: [Reserve Bank flags rising bad assets from Mudra loans](#)

What are the advantages associated with Mudra Scheme?

The advantages associated with the Mudra Scheme, including:

Access to credit: The Mudra Scheme provides collateral-free loans to small businesses and first-time borrowers, enabling them to access credit that they may not have been able to obtain from traditional financial institutions. This can help spur entrepreneurship and innovation, and create more jobs in the economy.

Financial inclusion: The Scheme promotes financial inclusion by providing loans to individuals and businesses who may not have had access to formal financial institutions. This can help in reducing inequality and promote economic growth.

Special focus on marginalized groups: The Mudra Scheme has a special focus on supporting borrowers from marginalized communities such as SC/ST and OBC, as well as women entrepreneurs. By providing loans to these underserved populations, the scheme promotes greater inclusion and reduces inequality.

Promoting entrepreneurship: By providing loans to first-time borrowers and start-ups, the Mudra Scheme encourages entrepreneurship and innovation, which can create new jobs, boost economic growth, and improve the overall business environment in the country.

Low-interest rates: The Mudra Scheme offers loans at relatively low interest rates, making credit more affordable for small businesses and first-time borrowers.

Flexible loan options: The Mudra Scheme offers a range of loan products to suit the needs of different types of borrowers, including micro-enterprises, small businesses, and start-ups. This can ensure that borrowers are able to access the financing they need to pursue their business goals.

What should be done to take this scheme to new highs?

Increase awareness: Many small businesses and entrepreneurs in India may not be aware of the Mudra Scheme or how to access it. Increasing awareness through targeted marketing campaigns and outreach programs can help more people benefit from the scheme.

Simplify the application process: The application process for the scheme can be complex and time-consuming. Simplifying the process and reducing the documentation requirements can make it easier for small businesses to apply for loans and access the funds they need.

Strengthen monitoring and evaluation: Monitoring and evaluation are critical to ensuring that the Mudra Scheme is achieving its goals and reaching the target beneficiaries. Strengthening these processes can identify any issues or challenges and address them in a timely manner.

Expand the network of lending institutions: Currently, the scheme is primarily implemented through public sector banks. Expanding the network of lending institutions, including private

banks and microfinance institutions, can increase access to credit and promote competition in the market.

Provide additional support services: In addition to providing loans, the Mudra Scheme could provide additional support services such as business training and mentorship programs to help small businesses succeed and grow.

Increase loan amount: The scheme can consider increasing the loan amount for borrowers, especially those who have a good track record of repayment. This can help businesses access larger amounts of credit and invest in their growth and expansion.

Harnessing the power of technology: By doing so, the Mudra Scheme can improve its efficiency, reduce the risk of fraud, and reach a wider audience of potential borrowers. For example, better utilisation of 5G technology and e-commerce would be helpful in this regard.

Sources: The Hindu ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), Livemint ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), [Business Standard](#), [Economic Times](#) and [AIR](#)

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

Changes to the NCERT syllabus and associated issues – Explained, pointwise

Introduction

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has made 1,334 changes in 182 books to its syllabus for various classes, including the removal of certain texts related to the Mughal era, the Delhi Sultanate, and the role of Hindu extremist organizations in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

While the NCERT has cited rationalization and reduction of content load as the reasons for the changes, they have faced criticism for being politically motivated and revisionist. These changes have raised concerns about the implications for India's education system and its impact on the country's collective memory and national identity.

What are the recent changes in the NCERT syllabus?

Some of the key changes are:

Class 12 History: Chapters related to the Mughal Empire have been removed from the textbook 'Themes of Indian History-Part II.'

Class 12 Civics: Chapters like 'American Hegemony in World Politics' and 'The Cold War Era' have been removed from the Civics textbook.

Class 12 Indian Politics after Independence: Two chapters, 'Rise of Popular Movements' and 'Era of One Party Dominance,' have been removed.

Class 10 Democratic Politics-2: Chapters such as 'Democracy and Diversity,' 'Popular Struggles and Movements,' and 'Challenges of Democracy' have been dropped.

Class 11 Themes in World History: Chapters like 'Central Islamic Lands,' 'Clash of Cultures,' and 'Industrial Revolution' have been removed.

Other changes are Content on the government's ban on the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) following Gandhi's assassination. References to Nathuram Godse's background and his connection to extremist Hindu newspapers.

About the previous changes in the NCERT Syllabus

30% of the NCERT syllabus was removed as part of the syllabus rationalisation in 2022. The process resulted in the removal of sections from the curriculum, including lessons on Gujarat riots, Mughal courts, the Emergency, the Cold War, and the Naxalite movement, among others.

It is worth mentioning that not just revamping the textbooks, the NCERT has also revised the National Curriculum Framework after 14 years on the lines of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The previous four occasions when the NCF was revised were in 1975, 1988, 2000 and 2005.

These changes have been made in line with the updated syllabus and are being implemented in schools following the NCERT syllabus from the 2023-2024 academic session.

What is the rationale behind the changes in the NCERT syllabus?

The rationale behind the changes in the NCERT syllabus can be seen from multiple perspectives:

The previous syllabus is not aligned with new educational policies: It is essential to revise and align the current NCERT syllabus with the new education policy to ensure that it meets the updated objectives, priorities, and guidelines.

Outdated content: Some parts of the syllabus may contain outdated or irrelevant information, which may not be applicable or useful for students in the contemporary context. For example, issues like Swachh Bharat, Digital India, GST, 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao', demonetisation etc are missing in the current syllabus.

Bias and controversy: The NCERT syllabus has faced criticism for potential biases and controversies in its content. This could include the portrayal of historical events, political issues, or cultural aspects that may be seen as promoting a particular viewpoint or ideology.

For example, the book on Politics in Independent India has chapters on 'the era of one-party dominance'. Under this section, the nature of the dominance of the Congress, Socialist, Communist Party, Communist Party of India, Bharatiya Jana Sangh etc, were being taught to the students.

Lack of inclusivity: The syllabus may not adequately represent the diverse cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds of India, which can lead to a lack of understanding and appreciation of the country's rich heritage and diversity. For example, more space was given to Mughal Empire.

Heavy workload to students: The NCERT syllabus is often criticized for being too vast and demanding, leading to a high workload for students, which can have negative impacts on their mental and physical well-being.

Addressing feedback from educators and stakeholders: Changes may be made based on feedback from teachers, students, and other stakeholders to ensure that the curriculum remains effective and engaging.

What are the advantages of the new changes in the NCERT syllabus?

Advantages of Changes in NCERT Syllabus:

Inclusion of Modern Schemes and Programs: The changes in the NCERT syllabus have included references to modern schemes and programs introduced by the Indian government, such as Digital India, Make in India, and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. This helps students to stay up-to-date with the latest developments and be more informed citizens.

Increased Emphasis on Ancient Indian Knowledge: The revised syllabus places greater emphasis on ancient Indian knowledge and practices, such as yoga, Ayurveda, and Vedic mathematics. This helps students to appreciate their cultural heritage and understand the value of traditional practices.

Focus on Nationalist Figures: The changes have given greater recognition to nationalist figures who played an important role in India's struggle for independence but were overlooked in the past. For example, the new textbooks include more information about freedom fighters like Veer Savarkar, Subhash Chandra Bose, and Sardar Patel.

Reduced Content Load: The rationalisation of the syllabus has resulted in a reduction of 30% of the content load, which means that students have to study fewer topics in each subject. This

helps to reduce the burden on students and enables them to focus more on understanding the concepts in depth.

Updated Content: The revised syllabus includes updated content to reflect the latest developments in various fields, such as science, technology, and social issues. This helps students to keep pace with the rapidly changing world and be better prepared for the future.

What are the challenges associated with the changes in the NCERT syllabus?

Implementation challenges: The sudden removal of certain topics and the addition of new ones may pose challenges in terms of implementing the new syllabus effectively. For example, teachers may require additional training to teach new topics, and schools may need to invest in new resources such as updated textbooks and teaching aids.

Controversial changes: The removal of certain topics, such as the Mughal era and Gandhi's assassination, has been controversial and has raised concerns about the government's motives. Some argue that these changes are politically motivated, while others believe that they are an attempt to rewrite history to fit a specific agenda.

Impact on student learning: There is a risk that some of the changes made to the NCERT syllabus may negatively impact student learning. For example, the removal of certain historical events or figures may lead to an incomplete or biased understanding of the subject matter.

Resistance to change: There may be resistance to the changes made to the NCERT syllabus from various stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents. Some may argue that the changes are unnecessary or that they undermine the credibility of the education system.

Unequal access to resources: The changes made to the NCERT syllabus may require schools to invest in new resources, such as textbooks and teaching aids, which may not be affordable for all schools. This could result in unequal access to resources and opportunities for students, depending on their socioeconomic background.

Impact on standardized tests: The changes to the syllabus could have an impact on standardized tests and college admissions, as these exams often test knowledge based on the old syllabus.

Read here: [NCERT textbook revision](#)

What should be done?

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to address the challenges associated with changes in the NCERT syllabus. However, here are some suggestions that could help:

Engage in constructive dialogue: It is important to have a constructive dialogue between all stakeholders, including educators, students, parents, and policymakers. This can help to address the concerns and ensure that the changes made in the syllabus are in line with the needs of the students and society as a whole.

Conduct thorough research and analysis: Before making any changes to the syllabus, it is important to conduct thorough research and analysis to ensure that the changes are evidence-based and have a sound pedagogical rationale.

Ensure diversity and inclusivity: The syllabus should be designed to promote diversity and inclusivity, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and varied experiences of Indian society.

Provide adequate training to teachers: Teachers should be provided with adequate training and professional development opportunities to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach the revised syllabus.

Monitor the implementation and impact of the changes: Regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation and impact of the changes in the syllabus can help to identify any issues and address them in a timely manner.

Overall, any changes made to the NCERT syllabus should be done with the best interest of the students and society in mind, keeping in mind the principles of diversity, inclusivity, and quality education for all.

Sources: Indian Express ([Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#)), [Times of India](#), [DNA India](#), [Business Standard](#)

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