



9 PM

Compilation

3rd to 8th April, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

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General Studies - 1

1. [Same-sex marriages: A matter for Parliament](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Same-sex marriages: A matter for Parliament**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **3rd April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Salient features of society

Relevance– Issues related to same sex marriages

News– The Supreme Court, in *Supriyo v. Union of India*, has referred the matter relating to legalisation of same-sex marriages to a Constitution Bench.

What is the position of the centre on same-sex marriage?

As per the arguments of center, the same -sex marriage is **not recognised by** Indian traditions, ethos, culture and the **societal conception** of the institution of marriage. Marriage is a **holy union** between a biological male and a biological female to form **to conceive Children**.

If same-sex marriages should be legalised, Parliament is the **right institution to debate and decide** and not the Court.

What are the arguments in support of court intervention in the issue?

It is the duty of the Court to address the **violations of fundamental rights**, which are arising due to non -recognition of same-sex marriages.

The question of same-sex marriages involves **conflict between** the **rights of a society** to conserve traditions and the **right of an individual** to enjoy his constitutional freedoms.

What are the arguments in support of the center’s position on this matter?

Marriage is predominantly a social institution. Therefore, it should be the domain of the government to legislate. This point is supported by the following 4 arguments:

First, the question of same-sex marriage has the potential to change the **concept of a family** which is the **building block of society**. Most of the conventional definitions of marriage adhere to the Centre’s conceptualization of the institution.

While same-sex marriages are not a threat to this understanding, they demand a **nuanced alteration** of it.

Second, the **current legislative framework** promotes the **conventional understanding** of marriage. Marriages in India are governed by the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936; the Christian Marriage and Divorce Act, 1957; and Muslim Personal Laws**. All marriage laws recognize marriages between a man and a woman. Although the Special Marriage Act (SMA) of 1954, uses gender-neutral language, it cannot be presumed to favour same-sex marriage.

Third, religious and societal morality still conceptualises intercourse as a **procreative activity**. Various laws pertaining to marriage requires the **consummation of marriage for its validation**. Consummation for purposes other than procreation is not considered a **moral thing**. In the **legal concept of marriage, procreation** is a basic requirement. **Section 12 of the Hindu Marriage Act** provides that where a marriage has not been consummated owing to the impotence of one of the parties, the said marriage is voidable.

Fourth, center’s concerns regarding alteration of family unit are not as regressive as they looks. It is in line with the broader social acceptability. For example, Live-in relationships are judicially recognised, but they are not equated to marriage under the law. The social acceptability of such relationships remains debated.

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What is the way forward for same sex marriages in India?

The issue of legal recognition of same-sex unions requires a **broader debate** in society and the legislature.

The **rights issues** related to same sex marriages are **substantial** and must be addressed immediately. The push to formalise the institution of same-sex unions must come from representative bodies such as Parliament.

2. [Make In India. Indians Need It](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Make In India. Indians Need It”** published in **The Times of India** on **5th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Demographic Dividend

Relevance: measures needed to utilize India’s demographic dividend

News: The UN has projected that India would overtake China as the most populous country during April. This has led to debate over the benefits of high demographic dividend.

How can India utilize its demographic dividend?

India’s fertility rate has declined to replacement level last year. It has a median age of 28 years, significantly lower than 38 in the United States and 39 in China.

Hence, **India can have the largest workforce in the world for at least the next 25 years**. However, India can only materialize if it **is able to generate jobs for the millions of youths**.

According to **the McKinsey Global Institute 2020 report**, India needs to create at least 90 million new non-farm jobs to accommodate fresh entrants into the labor force by 2030.

Must Read: [Reaping India’s demographic dividend](#)

What is the present situation of unemployment in India?

According to the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy, the unemployment rate in March was 7.8%.

This is an underestimate **because of the huge ‘disguised unemployment’**. People who are involved in agriculture and other informal sectors on low wages are also counted as fully employed.

Further, **the female labour force participation rate in India is not only low compared to other South Asian economies but is declining**.

Moreover, it has become common in India for post graduates to apply for low-level government jobs. This highlights the quality of education and the problem of employment in India.

How can jobs be created and what are the challenges?

There is a misconception that the software industry as a service provider has been a big job creator. In reality, **the large majority of jobs created in the services sector have been the low wage, low productivity type in the informal sector**.

Further, there are views that India should focus on the services sector because the demand for services will grow as aging populations in rich countries will consume more services than goods. However, **along with skilling its labour force, India needs to focus on the growth of its manufacturing industry**. It has the potential to meet the job challenge and create millions of jobs for youths.

In this regard, **the government’s ‘Make in India’ campaign is the hope and expectation that India can replicate the China model of export to the rich world**.

However, the development of robotics and machine learning are taking away jobs in the manufacturing sector and India is also looking for friend-shoring and reshoring of production.

Must Read: [At the centre of job creation](#)

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What lies ahead?

India imports goods worth over \$100 billion annually from China. If even half of this can be made at home by productivity improvement, it will mean millions of jobs.

Therefore, India should look forward to expand its manufacturing sector to reap the benefits of demographic dividend.

3. [Each of Earth's tectonic plates has its own history](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Each of Earth's tectonic plates has its own history**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Geography

Relevance: geographical features of the Earth.

News: The article discusses various geographical feature of the Earth.

What is a mantle?

It is the layer **between the crust and the core** at Earth's centre. The mantle is **solid rock and composes the majority of the volume of our planet**. This rock is slowly convecting, like a boiling pot of water.

Motions of the rock over very long periods of time are closely tied to the movement of tectonic plates on Earth's surface. Such plate motions then give us earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

What are the effects of tectonic plate movements?

Tectonic plate system with plates moving all over, collide, rip apart and modify lithosphere.

The Himalayan Mountain range was caused by the collision of the Indian plate with Eurasia. The force which built up this range caused the lithosphere and crust to thicken. **Currently, India is moving north at a rate of 3.5 cm each year.**

What are the effects of gravity?

Gravity acts on plates and can **cause mountain ranges over tens of millions of years to very slowly collapse**. Gravity operates deep beneath Earth to remove elements of the lithosphere.

In certain locations, small pieces that are cold and thick in comparison to the mantle drop off the bottom due to gravity. **This is a process of modifying the lithosphere.**

What is a subduction zone?

Under this, **the oceanic part of the tectonic plates gets recycled back into the mantle.**

The oceanic crust gets formed at mid-ocean ridges and destroyed and recycled at a subduction zone, where one oceanic plate sinks into the mantle. **The driving force is gravity.**

This is a way Earth recycles material from its surface to its interior and vice versa.

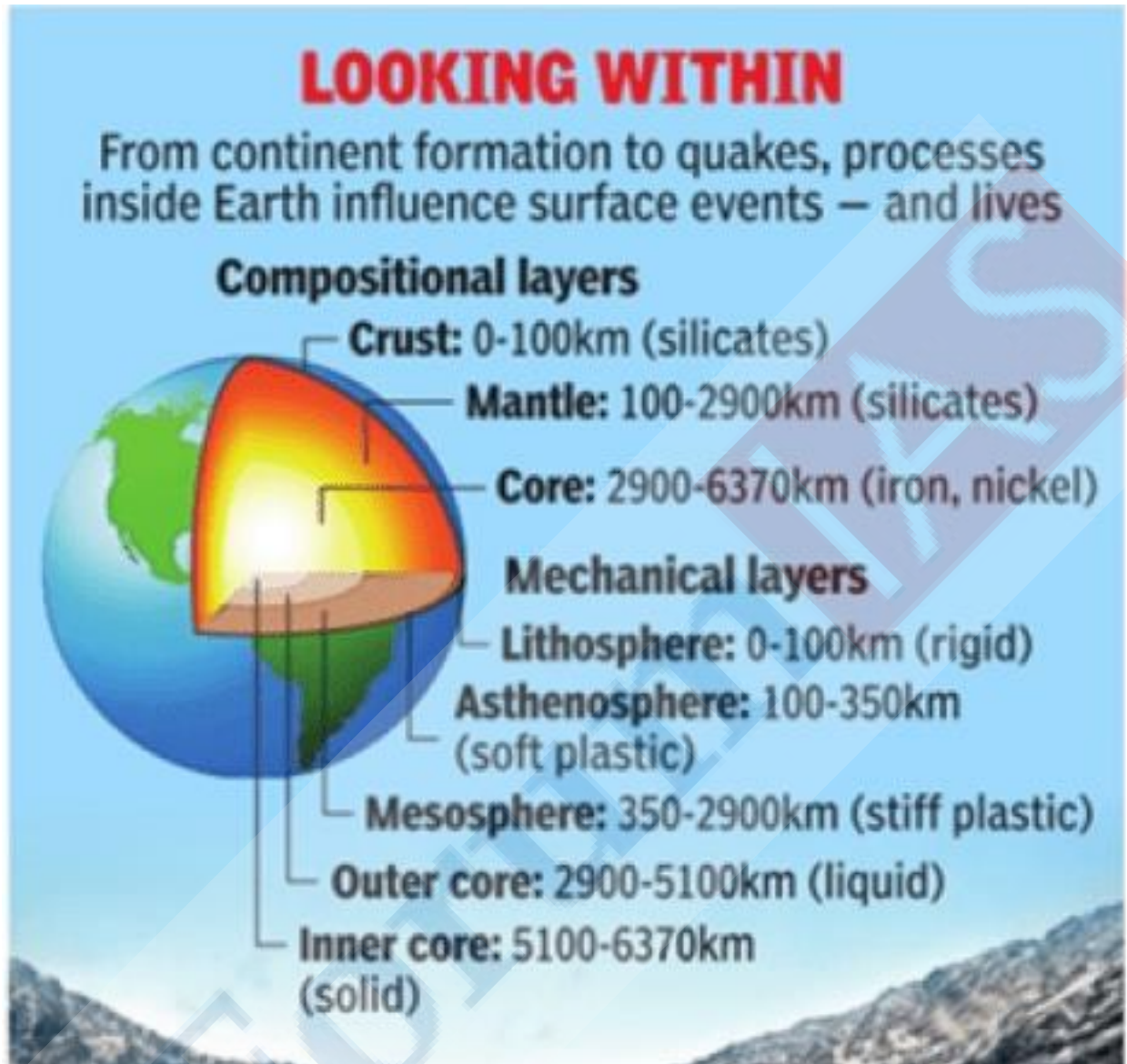
A lot of Earth's carbon cycle is controlled by subduction. Carbon also gets locked into limestone rocks which are absorbed back into Earth's interior. **Subduction zones are the prime sites for geologic hazards like earthquakes and tsunamis.**

Which part of India is more vulnerable to earthquakes?

Many regions become prone to earthquakes because of tectonic plates. The **northern part of India and its surrounding countries are more vulnerable** as they are **located on a major plate boundary where quakes occur**.

People in such zones should be prepared with sustainable building, resilient infrastructure and keeping emergency communications and aid measures ready and handy to minimize damage.

Must Read: [Lessons from Turkey: How to make India earthquake prepared](#)



Source: The Times of India

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General Studies Paper -2

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General Studies - 2

1. [Going beyond customs: On full exemption from basic customs duty for drugs, food imported for treatment of rare diseases](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Going beyond customs: On full exemption from basic customs duty for drugs, food imported for treatment of rare diseases**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **3rd April 2023**.

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

Relevance– Issues Related to rare diseases

News– Centre has announced the full exemption from basic customs duty for all drugs and food imported for treatment of rare diseases listed under the National Policy for Rare Diseases.

To avail this exemption, the individual importer must produce a certificate from specified authorities.

Read more – [Drugs for rare diseases get customs duty relief](#)

What are arguments in support of the centre move to announce exemptions?

Rare diseases are a group of diseases that **occur infrequently** in the community. So due to lack of a large number of people with disease, there is no **incentives** for pharma companies to produce life-saving medicines.

Some of these diseases do not have any **described treatment methodologies**. For existing treatments, the drugs have to be imported and costs are high. They are **inaccessible** to a large volume of patients.

The NPRD estimates that for a child weighing 10 kg, the annual cost of treatment for some rare diseases may vary from ₹10 lakh to more than ₹1 crore per year. Treatment is **lifelong** and drug dose and costs increase with age and weight. The duty exemption will lead to **substantial savings** for patients.

What is the way forward for proper management of rare diseases?

The sheer number of diseases is estimated between 7,000-8,000 conditions, and the number of people with some form of rare diseases in India is estimated at 100 million. It makes it a problem that cannot be ignored.

The government must ensure that its **directions are followed in full**. It must find **innovative solutions** for this category of patients.

2. [Lithium find in J&K: Chile, with most reserves, ready to share know-how](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Lithium find in J&K: Chile, with most reserves, ready to share know-how**” published in **The Indian Express** on **3rd April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: about Chile and India bilateral relations

News: The article discusses the ways through which Chile can help India in exploiting its lithium resources and other areas of cooperation between the two.

How can Chile help India in exploiting its lithium resources?

Chile is the country with the most lithium reserves (48% of the world’s total lithium deposits) and it is home to the **company SQM**, which is the second largest global lithium producer.

SQM has already invested in Australia where they have a Chilean-Australian joint venture called Covalent.

Therefore, **SQM can extend technical expertise in exploiting inferred lithium** resources of 5.9 million tonnes in Salal-Haimana area of Reasi district in Jammu and Kashmir.

Must Read: [Lithium Reserves in India: Strategic Significance and Concerns – Explained](#)

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What are the different areas of cooperation between India and Chile?

Currently, there is an agreement on **trade of goods** between the two nations.

The discussions were also made in 2019 by India for **procurement of lithium from Chile**. However, the initiative came to a halt due to the Covid.

Further, during the visit of the President of India to Chile in 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding (**MoU**) **between India and Chile on cooperation in geology and minerals was renewed for five years**.

Khanij Bidesh India Limited (**KABIL**) has also taken efforts last year to source **strategic minerals lithium and cobalt** from countries like Australia, Argentina and Chile.

There were also discussions going on in wide ranging areas including trade, technology, renewables, space, mining and education between the two nations.

3. [Shock & Awful – Poorly installed & maintained high-power cables kill thousands every year, but official apathy continues](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Shock & Awful – Poorly installed & maintained high-power cables kill thousands every year, but official apathy continues**” published in **The Times of India** on 4th April 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance: death caused by electrocution.

News: A British tourist has died in Himachal Pradesh from electrocution. The low-hanging high-voltage cable was installed by a major public sector undertaking – NHPC. Despite complaints to remove the cable, NHPC has not yet responded.

What are the concerns airing from the low-hanging high-voltage cables?

High power cables are often poorly installed close to houses with improper maintenance, especially in the urban areas.

Discoms hardly take any note of it and they are **also little accountable to the death** caused by those wires.

As per the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2021 report**, electrocution accounted for over 12,500 casualties, including 650 children aged below 14. This implies 34 people dying daily from electrocution.

These deaths are classified as accidents by NCRB. However, these deaths are the result of administrative negligence and apathy.

Further, election promises have led to unauthorized urban growth, making the problem more complex for cities.

What are some of the steps taken to prevent such deaths?

Kerala high court recently directed municipalities to remove such cables. Some towns have undertaken projects to underground electricity lines, but the speed of work has been inconsistent.

Despite these attempts, the issue is worsening due to a lack of planning for cities and towns.

4. [Why India should cut down on its salt intake](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Why India should cut down on its salt intake” published in “The Hindu” on 4th April 2023.

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

Relevance – Issues related to non-communicable diseases

News- The article explains the importance of salt reduction to reduce the prevalence of non-communicable diseases in India.

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What are some statistics related to salt consumption across the world and in India?

An average **Indian's sodium consumption** is more than double the physiological need. It exceeds the **WHO recommended daily intake** of less than 5 g of salt for adults.

The WHO has recently published the '**Global Report on Sodium Intake Reduction**. It tells about the progress of its member states toward **reducing population sodium intake**.

Progress has been slow. Only a few countries are making considerable headway towards the objective.

The WHO devised a **sodium score**. It ranges from 1 (least implementation) to 4 (highest implementation), for each member state. It is based on factors such as the **extent of implementation** of sodium reduction and other related measures.

India has **enacted voluntary measures** to decrease sodium in food supply and promote healthier food choices. **India's score of 2** signifies the presence of at least one voluntary policy.

Why is it essential for India to reduce its sodium intake?

Empirical evidence shows that **reduced sodium intake** is a **cost effective** approach to **decrease blood pressure**.

Lowering sodium intake by 1 gram per day leads to a 5 mm Hg reduction in blood pressure for individuals aged 55, and **decrease in stroke incidence**. High BP is a **critical risk factor** for cardiovascular disease.

The **economic impact** of cardiovascular disease on low- and middle-income countries is staggering. It is estimated at \$3.7 trillion between 2011 and 2025. This is equivalent to **2% of the GDP of LMICs**.

As per **World Economic Forum**, the Indian economy lost **more than \$2 trillion** between 2012 and 2030 as a consequence of cardiovascular disease.

How Cardiovascular disease and hypertension pose significant challenges in India?

As per data from the **Registrar General of India, WHO, and the Global Burden of Disease Study**, cardiovascular diseases have emerged as the **primary cause of mortality and morbidity**.

Hypertension has been identified as the **leading risk factor** for such diseases in India.

Data from the **NFHS-5** reveals that hypertension is more prevalent among men aged 15 and above compared to women.

Hypertension is more common in southern States, particularly Kerala. Punjab and Uttarakhand in the north also report high incidence rates.

The **2020 Report on Medical Certification of the Cause of Death** shows that **circulatory system diseases** account for 32.1% of all documented deaths. Among them, hypertension is a major risk factor.

What are the steps taken by the government to reduce salt intake?

FSSAI has implemented the '**Eat Right India**' movement. Its aim is to transform the nation's food system to ensure **secure, healthy, and sustainable nutrition** for all citizens.

FSSAI launched a social media campaign called **Aaj Se Thoda Kam**.

What is the way forward to reduce salt intake?

India needs a **comprehensive national strategy** to curb salt consumption.

A **multi-pronged approach** is needed. **Engaging consumers, industry, and the government** is crucial.

Collaboration between State and Union governments is essential to combat hypertension caused by excessive sodium intake.

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5. [Economic winds favour an India-UK trade agreement](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Economic winds favour an India-UK trade agreement” published in the “Live Mint” on 4th April 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- Trade and economic relationship between India and UK

News- The eighth round of India-UK free trade agreement (FTA) discussions will take place soon.

What is the significance of a trade deal between the India and UK?

Both countries are **top exporters and importers of merchandise and services**. Through the agreement, the UK wants **wider access to the Indian market** for its export items such as Scotch whisky premium cars and legal services.

India is the **third-largest services exporter** to the UK. A trade deal would only widen market access for Indian service firms.

Further, the two countries trade in **similar but distinct products**. Freer import of luxury cars from the UK does not present any significant threat to domestic car manufacturers. They primarily cater to middle-class buyers.

In 2018, the top export industry between the UK and India was ‘**computer programming, consultancy, and related activities**’ for both countries. The two countries have **different and possibly complementary capabilities** within the same industry.

What is the scope of trade deals for India and UK?

India is likely to sign a trade deal that would **lower tariffs on key products**, subject to **compliance with rules of origin**. The UK may insist on **relaxed regulations on customs procedures and easier regulations on doing business**.

This may have wider benefits for India. It will make the country an **attractive investment destination** for other developed nations too.

A trade deal is likely to **boost the drugs and pharmaceutical industries** of both. But, it will depend on **mutually acceptable recognition of intellectual property rights**.

What are the areas in the deal that need greater attention?

The trade deal should look after the **Indian economy’s expanding needs**.

There is a greater focus on students getting **work experience and technical training** in the **New Education Policy**. India should negotiate better terms for students to get such training in the UK.

The two countries need to **recognize the educational qualifications** of their counterparts. The **Skill India programme** could benefit from the **UK framework of Vocational Technical Courses**.

An agreement on the mutual recognition of qualifications would help India-educated workers to become **globally competitive**. This will allow **greater movement of skilled workers** between both economies.

Green technology presents another avenue for mutual gains between India and the UK. The Indian government has launched several programmes to boost **domestic tourism**.

However, with increasing tourism in Indian natural hotspots comes a need for **environment-friendly initiatives** to reduce waste generation in our rivers and mountains. This presents an opportunity for **investment in green technology**.

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6. [We should worry about use of defamation law, beyond Rahul Gandhi case](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “We should worry about use of defamation law, beyond Rahul Gandhi case” published in “The Indian Express” on 4th April 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- India Polity

Relevance- Issues related to freedom of speech and expression

News- Recently, Rahul Gandhi was convicted for two years in a defamation case that led to his disqualification from Parliament.

How freedom of speech is under threat in India?

As per a recent report by **Common Cause and Lokniti-CSDS**, nearly two out of three respondents are scared to post their political or social opinions. They fear **legal action**.

Political parties continue to use the **colonial era law** as a weapon against their opponents and journalists.

What are legal aspects related to defamation?

The criminal offence of defamation is contained under **Section 499 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the civil law** that provides for damages.

In 2016, the defamation law was challenged before the Supreme Court. But it held that the **right to reputation** is no less important than the **right to freedom of speech**.

What are the issues with legal aspects of defamation?

Civil defamation cases are **prone to abuse**. These cases are impacted by **long case pendency** in the judicial system and **exaggerated claims for damages**.

Civil law is **scattered across judgments** and not properly codified. This creates **more uncertainty and results in the pendency**.

Sometimes, a **reluctant apology** is extracted to achieve a settlement. This does not serve the **cause of justice**.

What are the reasons behind the continuation of defamation laws in the legal system?

There were **no serious or sustained efforts** towards the repeal of defamation laws. **Sustained political advocacy** on issues of free expression is absent.

Political parties across the spectrum have failed to **articulate popular narratives**. They have not **built constituencies of support** for the repeal of colonial laws.

7. [Concerns associated with World Happiness Report: Their Blindness To Our Happiness](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Their Blindness To Our Happiness**” published in **The Times of India** on 4th April 2023.

Syllabus: GS – 2: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Relevance: About concerns associated with World Happiness Report.

News: The World Happiness Report was released recently. It has ranked India 126 out of 137 countries.

What are the key highlights of the World Happiness Report?

Read here: [World Happiness Report: Finland happiest country in the world, India ranked 126th: U.N. report](#)

What are the concerns associated with World Happiness Report and India’s ranking in it?

Sustainable Development Solutions Network’s (SDSN) capacity: SDSN is a relatively small organisation, with an annual revenue of around \$11 million, mainly in grants.

Defining happiness is not feasible: Happiness is a big, emotive word, just like hunger.

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Note: Global Hunger Index ranked India at 107 out of 121 countries, behind North Korea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Rwanda, Nigeria and Congo.

The criteria are depended more on Gallup World Poll. The poll asks people about where they currently are in life (on a scale of 1 to 10) versus where they could best possibly be (which would be a full 10 score). If the respondent gives a low rating, then the country is considered not happy. The main issue with this poll is that if the persons have higher aspirations, then they are considered as unhappy.

Limited polling: The poll asks the above questions to 500-2,000 people per country. So, 2,000 people's view is used to decide the global happiness rank of a nation having 1.4 billion people.

Tilted to rich countries: The report also has factors which favour rich countries. Such as **a) per capita income** – favouring rich countries and assuming being richer the happier, **b) charity** – rich countries give more, **c) Level of corruption** – low in developed countries, **d) social welfare benefits** – Rich countries have more and **e) How independently a person is making decisions** – individualistic western societies will score well, and collectivist society like India will not.

Issues with Finland's ranking: Finland is ranked as the happiest country in the world for six years in a row. However, its ranking has raised certain questions. Such as, **a)** The country is near the North Pole and parts of which have temperatures below -40 °C in the winter and the sun does not rise for nearly two months during parts of the year. Thus, there is a permanent dark for 50 days and 50 nights, **b)** Finnish people, at least as per stereotype, are silent and do not talk much.

Despite that, Finland is ranked as the happiest place on Earth.

Does not measure the required aspects: The report does not include **a)** Celebration of festivals, **b)** Depression rates around the world, **c)** Divorce rates, **d)** Time period in which old people meet their kids, **e)** The closeness of grandparents to grandchildren, **f)** The peace people feel due to their relationship with God.

Overall, the report needs some rework, especially with a focus towards developing countries like India.

8. Equality and justice, for and beyond queer and trans community

Source- The post is based on the article "Equality and justice, for and beyond queer and trans community" published in "The Indian Express" on 5th April 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the populations

Relevance- Issues related to discriminated sections of the society

News- The article deals with issues of equality and justice for discriminated communities.

What is progress achieved in India on rights of vulnerable communities?

In **Naz Foundation v Govt of NCT (2009)**, the Delhi HC decriminalized homosexual sex between adults. The Supreme Court struck down **Section 377** in 2018.

Today, the government is proactive in **HIV/AIDS sensitization**. The **National AIDS Program** has been a crucial step forward. It allows innumerable citizens to have access to **free information, medicines, and healthcare**.

What is needed for true equality and justice of vulnerable communities?

First, people-first policies are required. People are not at the center of government interventions. Implementation of policies and laws continues to be a challenge. Tackling this requires a **change in strategy**. There is a need for **reimagining policy, law, and interventions**. There is a need to focus on **values of empathy, love and respect**. Children should be taught these values. These should be prompted as **core values in our society**.

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Invented names: On India's response to China's fresh attempt to lay claim over parts of Arunachal Pradesh

Source- The post is based on the article "Invented names: On India's response to China's fresh attempt to lay claim over parts of Arunachal Pradesh" published in the "The Hindu" on 5th April 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- India and China bilateral relationship

News- Recently, China has announced that it would rename 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh.

What are the factors behind this Chinese move?

It may be **China's reaction** after the Indian Army failed a PLA attempt to take over a post at **Yangtse in the Tawang sector** in December 2022.

It may be in response to India's decision to hold a **G-20 engagement group meeting on Innovation technology** in Itanagar which the Chinese embassy had boycotted.

It reflects the **low point in ties** and the **lack of meaningful dialogue** for three years since the Chinese troops transgressed the LAC at Galwan in 2020. **Political relations** have not resumed despite many rounds of talks between two sides.

What is the way forward for India?

The government shows **more clarity on the nature of its conversations** thus far.

It should **probe the reasons** behind China's moves and the motivation for its **persistent aggressions**. Otherwise, it will be hard to prepare for a **future course of action**.

9. [We should harness the emotional energy of India's DPI](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**We should harness the emotional energy of India's DPI**" published in the "**mint**" on **6th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- e-governance

Relevance- Issues related to public digital infrastructure

News- The focus of the second G20 Sherpa meeting held at Kumarakom, Kerala was on India's Digital Public Infrastructure.

Read More – [India's Digital Public Infrastructure \(DPI\) and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the achievements of India in DPI?

UPI has over **350 banks on its network with over 260 million unique users**. The network has grown to become the world's **fifth largest digital-payment network** by volume.

CoWin has more than **1.1 billion registered users** and every step of their vaccination process is captured by it.

More than 500 million learning sessions have been conducted by using the **Diksha app**. It was the key tool for education during the covid pandemic.

Digilocker has more than **150 million registered users**.

1.35 billion people have enrolled for Aadhaar. **Jan Dhan** has enabled **478 million people** to get bank accounts. India has a **mobile user base of 1.2 billion** across the country. Together, these three developments constitute **Jam trinity**.

The **quality of digital infrastructure** in India is robust. The **co-operation** between the government and the private sector is the **core of the DPI**.

What is lacking in case of India DPI?

India has failed to effectively communicate the achievements in DPI to a wider audience. These technological solutions have not been able to create a unified new image for the country.

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How better communication is possible in case of DPI?

Communication is not a **rational process of citing scientific facts and statistics**. Good communication is all **about emotions**. It is about **real-life stories** from ordinary people's lives. Kerala tagline 'God's Own Country' is an excellent example of good communication. It perfectly captures the emotions a tourist would experience.

Similarly, various DPI programmes can evoke **several positive emotions** in many a user's mind. The Apollo 11 mission in 1969 established US hegemony during the Cold War. Communication about India's DPI could help **uplift the emotional quotient** of the whole country.

10. [We need reforms that'll ensure justice prevails](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“We need reforms that'll ensure justice prevails”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **5th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary. GS3- Security

Relevance– Issues related to criminal justice system, and law & order

News– The India Justice Report of 2022 was recently released by Tata Trusts.

What are the main highlights of India Justice Report, 2022?

Pending cases in courts– Covid has slowed down the **pace of case-clearance** by courts. Pending cases increased from **41 million in 2020 to 49 million in 2022**. India has 5.6 million pending for longer than a decade and 190,000 cases pending for over 30 years.

Lack of judicial strength– The judiciary has a **lack of capacity**. There are a total of 20,093 judges at work. There exist **15 judges for every million Indians**. It is less than a third of the **50 recommended by the Law Commission in 1987**.

Overcrowding of prisons– There has been a sharp rise in **overcrowding of Indian prisons**. There are **30 extra inmates** in 2021 for an existing capacity of 100. 77% of them were **under-trials**. It is up from about 69% two years earlier.

It violates the norm of **“bail not jail”** and shows the **lack of apathy**.

Policing issues– The report highlights the issues related to police forces. There exist **state-wise variation** on several counts, like **vacancies, training budgets, police station cameras**.

Except in Union territories governed by the Centre, law-enforcers operate directly under state governments. So politics has a **structural role** in justice delivery.

Lack of police diversity is a common problem across states. There is a **lack of participation** on the basis of gender, caste or other markers of identity. It can **lead to biases**.

Women cops are in shortages. All police stations are supposed to have **women's helpdesks**. But, 28% do not have this facility and many others don't have women cops ready to respond.

There is a **lack of autonomy** for the police. politicians are reluctant to empower police officers.

11. [The takeaways from the UN World Water Conference](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“The takeaways from the UN World Water Conference”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **5th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Global groupings and agreements. GS1- Economic geography

Relevance– Issues related to water management at domestic and international level

News– Recently, the World Water Conference that was convened by the United Nations

What are the important outcomes of the conference?

The conference held a **mid-term review of the Water Action Decade 2018--2028**. It envisages the sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

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The central outcome of the conference was the **international Water Action Agenda**. Under it, Governments, multilateral institutions, businesses, and non-governmental organisations submitted over 670 commitments to address **water security issues**.

What are the key issues related to developments at conference?

The commitments made at the conference **must be scrutinised**. There is a need to see whether they will yield **universal, safe, affordable and equitable access to water**. Meeting this target by 2030 will need **capital expenditures of \$114 billion per year**.

The World Bank estimates that **operations and maintenance for basic water and sanitation service costs** will rise from about \$4 billion to over \$30 billion per year by 2030. It is far more than the **capital costs for basic WASH services**.

As per WB study, funding from regional, national, and international sources prioritises **new water infrastructure** rather than on **water maintenance services**. It results in **decreased service** for water customers.

As per **World Resources Institute**, commitments made by the states lack **proper finance and targets** that are **quantifiable in nature**. Investment of this range would require **valuing water**. This will require robust **water measurement and accounting**.

There are **serious limitations** in our knowledge about the **volume, flux and quality of water** in lakes, rivers, soils and aquifers. There are **huge gaps in water usage data**.

Water is not considered as a **global public good**. It is not considered to be an area of **urgent funding** as compared to climate change. GEF is the only **international funding mechanism** that has provided **grant and concessional loans** for 300 watersheds and an even greater number of aquifers.

What are major developments related to India on water management?

India has committed an **investment of \$240 billion** in the water sector and efforts to **restore groundwater level** at the conference.

A **2021 CAG report** says that **groundwater extraction** in India increased from 58% to 63% between 2004--17. This has been further exacerbated by climate change.

The **revised Groundwater Bill 2017** gives power to State groundwater boards for **creating laws, managing water allocation and other relevant issues**.

The State boards are **understaffed, and lack expertise**. They prioritise **socio political conflicts over groundwater resources**.

What are legal aspects related to conference?

In international law, states have the authority to make **voluntary commitments** to address **issues of global concern**. These commitments are distinguished from other legal forms. They are generally **independent of the commitments of other parties**.

States have taken **voluntary commitments** to curb greenhouse gases and to take measures to **promote sustainability**, even in the absence of a **legally non binding instrument**.

In the case of climate change, these voluntary commitments take place within a broader context of binding agreements: the **UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement**.

The 2023 Water Conference takes place within the **context of SDG 6**, and not within the context of the **UN Water Convention 1997 and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention 1992**. These are **two legally binding legal instruments on regulation of trans-boundary river water courses**.

Common thread between the Water Conference and the two conventions are SDG 6 targets that focus on implementation of **integrated water resources management** at all levels.

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12. [The Just In Justice – A detailed report on the legal system shows how and why the poor are its biggest victims](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The Just In Justice – A detailed report on the legal system shows how and why the poor are its biggest victims**” published in **The Times of India** on **6th April 2023**.

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

Relevance: About India Justice Report.

News: Recently India Justice Report 2022 was released.

About India Justice Report 2022

Karnataka topped the ranking. Five of the top six places are taken up by states from southern India.

Significance: Small but consistent improvements lead to big jumps in ranking. For example, Karnataka jumped 13 places since IJR 2020 to the top in 2022.

Read here: [India Justice Report 2022 | Judge vacancies remain endemic](#)

What are the concerns highlighted by the India Justice Report 2022?

Foremost challenge in the criminal justice system: India’s capacity to satisfactorily deliver justice lags behind its demand. For example, 77% of India’s prison population is made up of undertrials, people who haven’t been convicted. On average, they are spending longer time in prison than before. Undertrials serving more than five years in prison have more than doubled to 11,490 in the period between December 2017 and December 2021.

Worsen India’s capacity to deliver justice: There are 50 million pending cases, and they are taking longer time to resolve. This will only worsen India’s capacity to deliver justice.

Lack of legal aid provision: 70% of litigants in Indian criminal cases are below the poverty line. Between 2020 and 2022, IJR data showed that there was a 67% decline in legal services clinics. This highlights the alarming decline in legal aid provision in India’s justice delivery system. This may be an explanatory factor for the deterioration of other indicators such as the average length of time spent in jail by undertrials.

Overall, the reforms in the justice delivery system are neglected due to excessive focus on [collegium reforms](#). So, this needs a reorientation.

13. [Finland joining NATO could affect Delhi too](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Finland joining NATO could affect Delhi too**” published in the **Indian Express** on **6th April 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Finland joining NATO.

News: Finland has long been neutral in Russia’s prolonged conflict with the West. But recent induction of Finland into the [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation \(NATO\)](#) is seen as a major setback for Russia.

Note: *Finland is NATO’s 31st member.*

What are the reasons for Finland joining NATO?

Finland was part of the Russian empire for a century. Finland’s neutrality in favour of the Soviet Union through the Cold War made “Finlandisation” part of the global diplomatic lexicon.

Note: *Finlandization refers to the policy of strict neutrality between Moscow (Russia) and the West that Finland followed during the decades of the Cold War.*

Many of Finland’s small European neighbours have been at the receiving end of Russia’s muscular regional policies over the last decade. But, the prolonged Russian invasion of Ukraine

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has increased fears among Central European countries. Hence, countries like Finland and Sweden seek NATO membership to secure their interests.

Must read: [What is 'Finlandization', discussed as a possible option for Ukraine?](#)

What is the Russian observation of Finland joining NATO?

One of the many justifications Russia said for the aggression against Ukraine was the relentless expansion of NATO closer to Russian borders since the late 1990s. Russia responded that NATO's inclusion of Finland is an "encroachment on Russian security and on Russia's national interests".

Read more: [NATO: Historical Context and its Role in Ukraine Conflict – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the implications of Finland joining NATO?

Increases the power of the Western alliance in the Nordic region: This is because **a)** Finland has maintained a small but capable armed force that is well-trained and resilient, **b)** As the Arctic ice cap melts amidst global warming, the high north has become attractive commercially and contested geopolitically. So, Finland's inclusion in NATO will give an edge to the US and its allies.

Militarisation of the high north appears inevitable: Finland and Sweden turn from neutrals to Western allies and China raises its profile in the Arctic in partnership with Russia. This might militarise the Nordic region in future. This might make global governance of the Arctic region increasingly problematic.

–**India** is an observer of the Arctic Council that seeks to promote wide-ranging cooperation in the polar north. Hence, India might want to watch closely the impact of Finland's NATO membership on the Arctic region.

Must read: [The role of North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\) in ensuring world peace](#)

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

Source: The post is based on the following articles

"Open justice – Supreme Court strikes a blow for both media freedom and fair procedure" published in **The Hindu** on **7th April 2023**.

"In Media One verdict, SC does some much-needed plain-speaking on national security" published in the **Indian Express** on **7th April 2023**.

"Free Speech: 1 Big Bench, 1 Benchmark" and **"Article 19 Redux"** published in **The Times of India** on **7th April 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Freedom of Press in India.

News: The Supreme Court in the **Madhyamam Broadcasting Limited vs Union of India case**, annulled the Union government's telecast ban on the Malayalam news channel.

What were the observations made by the court while delivering the judgment?

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

-The Centre said that the media channel is having alleged links with Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JEIH). But the Court points out that JEIH is not a banned organisation. So, "it will be rather precarious for the state to contend that links with the organisation would affect the sovereignty and integrity of the nation."

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-The court agrees that restrictions on press freedom could lead to a “homogenised view on issues that range from socioeconomic polity to political ideologies” which “would pose grave dangers to democracy”.

-The Court could appoint an amicus curiae, who could be given access to the material whenever the state claims immunity from disclosure.

What is the significance of the ruling on Freedom of Press in India?

The ruling highlights **a) An independent press is vital** for the robust functioning of a democratic republic, **b) The “anti-establishment” views of Media channels are not adequate grounds** for invoking the national security exception to free speech, **c) The need for greater openness and more freedom of the press**, without which both justice and democracy are incomplete, **d) Set standards for restrictions** based on national security **and the use of sealed envelopes** by Centre, **e) Enforces** the established principle of natural justice thereby relevant material must be disclosed to the affected party along with ensuring right to appeal.

About the freedom of the press in India

Article 19 of the Constitution protects the freedom of the media. Like other fundamental rights, this freedom is subject to reasonable restrictions. **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”.

However, the Constitution doesn’t detail a benchmark to test the reasonableness of a restriction. This non-availability of benchmarks resulted in governments at all levels have been using restrictions arbitrarily to clamp down on journalists and thereby restrict media freedom in India.

How courts in the past had different views on freedom of the press?

The court judgments in matters of free speech have often varied. A senior advocate once said that “depending on where your matter goes, who those two judges are, the outcome can be completely, radically different.”

For example, **a) A SC bench** at present is looking at “**hate speech**” without even defining the term, **b) In 2010**, a SC bench upheld the ban on a book that was critical of Islam. In that, the court held “We are not against your right (to free speech). But we are more for public interest and public peace in the country.” **c) In 2017**, the court refused to ban a book which allegedly defamed the entire vysya community, **d) A recent trial court judgment** upheld a complaint against Rahul Gandhi for his alleged remarks on the surname Modi, for which he has been sentenced to two years in prison for **defamation**.

What should be done?

The court’s view on freedom of the press has to be reasonably consistent. SC must not leave matters to individual judges and specific cases to decide the law. As this can only result in contradictory guidelines on free speech. To avoid that, the SC should **constitute a full bench** of seven or nine judges **to review all free speech judgments** (or those curtailing them) of the past, both at the apex court level and the high courts. This bench **a) Can** bring out the real limits to free speech, and the legitimate exercise of this right, **b) Define** hate speech clearly, and **c) Laid** down guidelines for police forces to determine when a speech actually constitutes a threat to public order of a magnitude where things may go out of control.

15. [Why is India reaching out to Latin America?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why is India reaching out to Latin America?**” published in **Live Mint** on **7th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: India and Latin America Relations

News: India is trying to strengthen its relations with Latin American countries like Brazil, Argentina, etc. The article explains India’s interest in Latin America.

What has been the history of relations between India and Latin America?

After independence, **India had a very limited diplomatic and economic reach**. This forced India to prioritise ties with its neighbourhood and major Western powers.

However, **in its first annual report in 1948**, the external affairs ministry said its focus on Latin America was limited despite India’s interest in the region.

There were also domestic challenges with Latin American countries. Due to which, these two countries were not able to build their relations.

Why is India now interested in Latin America?

First, trade with Latin America has increased dramatically. Since 2000, **trade has increased by roughly 25% each year and is now close to \$50 billion**. The rise has been driven by industries such as automobiles.

Second, India’s desire to diversify its energy dependencies has pushed it towards Latin America. **Indian energy majors like ONGC are active in Colombia and Bharat Petroleum in Brazil**.

Renewable energy is also a priority, with opportunities for collaboration in ethanol and green hydrogen.

The region also contains critical deposits of resources such as copper and lithium, which will be **critical to India’s energy transformation ambitions**.

How has Latin America responded to India’s outreach?

Latin America has welcomed increased Indian interest and has tried to attract investment. The Panamanian foreign minister pointed out that **Latin American nations can connect Indian companies with the wider Americas market**.

The region has suffered due to Covid, Ukraine war and their economies are also struggling with poverty and inequality. In such a scenario, increased economic engagement with India is a key priority for many of the region’s economies.

What are the challenges?

India’s trade with Latin America is negligible in comparison to China’s enormous \$450 billion trading in that region. China is also a major lender to the region.

While other businesses are competing to take advantage of Latin America’s abundant natural resources, **Indian businesses have lagged behind**.

Hence, in order to overcome these challenges, **India will need to step up its economic diplomacy and join regional economic institutions like the Inter-American Development Bank**.

16. [Schooling Reforms – On National Curriculum Framework](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**Schooling Reforms**” published in the “**The Times of India**” on **7th April 2023**.

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

Relevance- Issues related to educational reforms

News- The draft National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for School Education 2023 is proposed by the government.

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What are some facts about the draft National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for School Education 2023?

It has recommended **major changes in assessment** across different levels of schooling. It envisages **students moving across arts, commerce and science** more freely, an increase in **self-assessment**, and board exams taking place at least twice a year.

What is the way forward for proper implementation of the draft National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for School Education 2023?

The document should be put in the **public domain** soon. That will remove **unjustified fears**. It will also encourage stakeholders to start a **constructive engagement** with reform proposals. Education policymakers should take lessons from the **past experiments**. **Continuous and comprehensive evaluation** was ushered in 2009 but has to end in 2017. **Good ideas with poor execution** are not successful.

17. [NCERT textbook revision](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**NCERT textbook revision: Why it happens every few years & what makes it controversial**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” and “**History textbook deletions: Why NCERT argument that it is trying to reduce pressure on students is weak**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on 7th April 2023.

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

Relevance- Issues related to syllabus and curriculum of textbooks

News- Recently, revision of NCERT books has created political controversy.

What are the revisions in NCERT textbooks?

The textbook rationalisation has resulted in some of the most sweeping changes in the curriculum since the NDA government came to power.

It includes removing all references to the 2002 Gujarat riots, reducing content related to the Mughal era and the caste system, and dropping chapters on protests and social movements, European presence in the Americas, etc.

Have there been controversies around NCERT textbooks earlier?

NCERT textbooks over the years have become the government’s medium for political communication and a battleground of competing ideologies.

New textbooks drafted in 2002-03 were criticised for portraying the Muslim rulers of India as savage invaders, and the mediaeval period as era of Islamic domination.

The UPA government made its own changes to school textbooks. In 2012, cartoons that were deemed derogatory to Jawaharlal Nehru and B R Ambedkar were removed from political science textbooks.

Why are controversies created by NCERT textbooks revision?

Many of these changes are seen as political. There are allegations that the rationalisation aims to align the curriculum with the ideology of the ruling party. Some of the changes appear to match the views expressed by members of the ruling establishment.

The rationale for the dropping of the various chapters is that these deletions would not affect the knowledge of children and an unnecessary burden would be removed.

But deleted chapters bring a different level of knowledge and understanding to the students.

It is not a simple case of reducing the load. It is because many of the deleted chapters have not been covered by previous classes. Furthermore, the level of discussion varies in textbooks for different classes. For example, chapter ‘Confrontation of Cultures’ that has been deleted from the Class 11 history textbook, has not been covered anywhere previously.

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It is the deletion from the Class 12 history book that is the most striking. Most of the chapter contains fresh material and perspectives to understand the developments that took place during the mediaeval period.

How to ensure that changes made in NCERT books are not questioned?

It would not be a proper thing to never bring changes in textbooks. New research may throw up interesting sources or interpretations of periods, institutions, rulers and the common people.

But these have to be based on rigorous research. Ideological orientation should not decide the history curriculum.

18. [Representation in India's police forces](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Representation in India's police forces**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th April 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Social Justice**

Relevance: **Findings of India Justice Report 2022.**

News: India Justice Report 2022 has been recently released.

What are the findings of the report for the police in India?

Overall Performer: Overall, the **Telangana police have bagged the top rank** among States while **West Bengal has come last**.

Overall Vacancies: The overall police vacancies increased from 20.3% of the sanctioned strength to 22.1% between January 2020 and January 2022.

Vacancies for Police constables: West Bengal was the worst performer among large and mid-size States with vacancies amounting to 44.1% of the sanctioned strength.

Kerala was at the top with constable vacancies making up 4.6% of the sanctioned strength.

Vacancies for Police officers: Bihar has the highest percentage of vacancies at 53.8% as against the sanctioned strength.

Must Read: [The Just In Justice – A detailed report on the legal system shows how and why the poor are its biggest victims](#)

How have States performed in fulfilling their quotas for Women, SC and ST communities in the Police?

Karnataka was the only State to meet its SC, ST, and Other backward classes quotas.

Scheduled Caste

Police Officers: Among **large and mid-sized States**, Gujarat at 131% was the best performer in terms of the percentage of actual SC police officers to its reservation quota while Uttar Pradesh came last with 43% SC officers against its quota.

Police Constables: Karnataka had 116% of SC constables against its quota, while Haryana had the lowest at 63%.

Small States: As for small States, Goa and Sikkim were the best performers for the percentage of SC officers and constables, respectively.

Scheduled Tribes

Police Officers: Karnataka, at 176%, was the best performer on the police officer level, going beyond its reserved ratio.

Police Constables: Bihar fulfilled its quota by 278%, while Punjab came in last in large and medium States at 0.01%.

Women

Most States have their own specific quotas for the number of women required in the police force.

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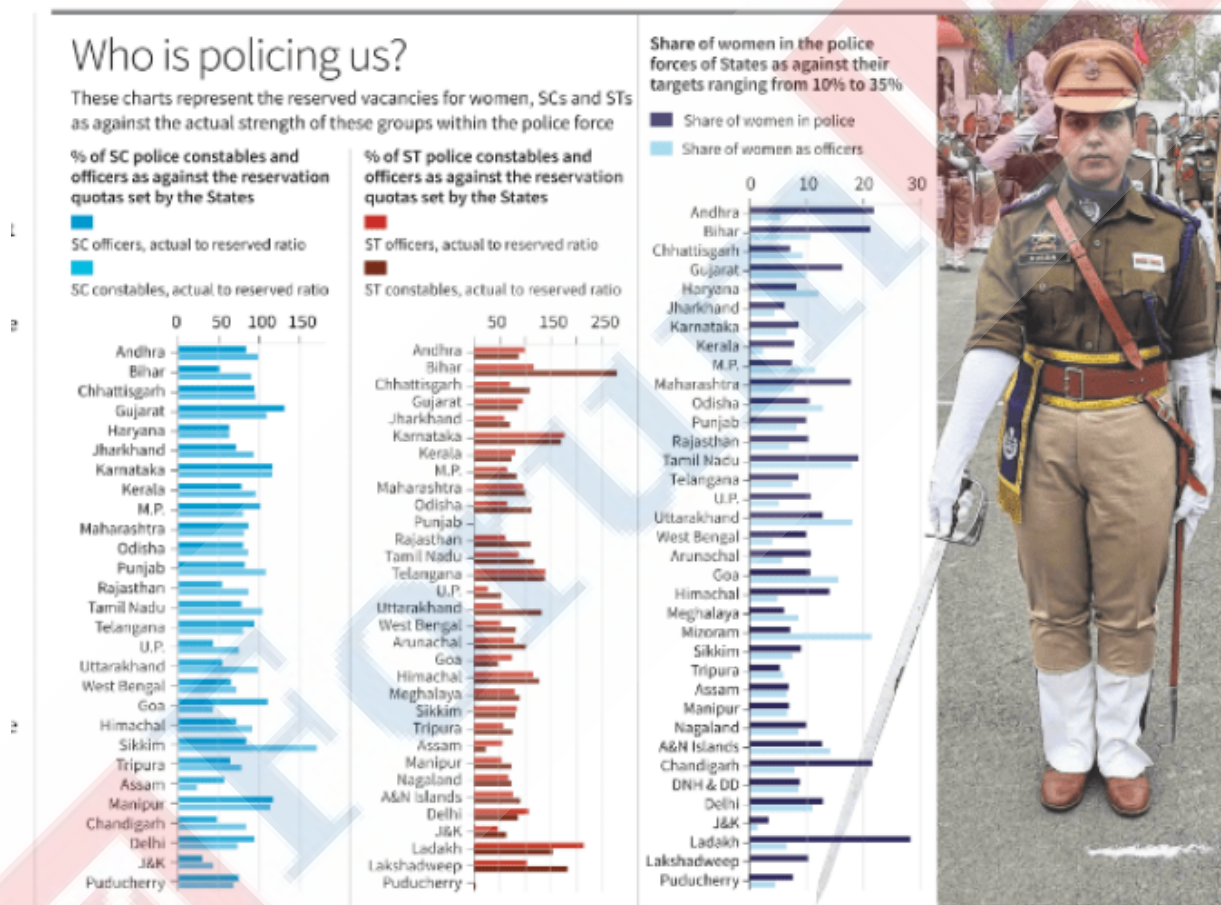
For instance, six UTs and nine States have a target of 33% reservation for women while it varies from Bihar's 35% to 10% in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura. **Five States/UTs, including Kerala and Mizoram, have no reservations.**

As per the findings, **no State which had the 33% criteria, managed to meet it** and it will take another 24 years to have 33% women in police forces across States.

However, **among large and medium States**, Andhra Pradesh which reserves 33% of overall police posts for women, performed the best with 21.8%. Jharkhand was the worst performer with its share of women in police being just 6.2%.

In small States, Himachal Pradesh was at the top with 14% while Tripura came in last with just 5.3%. **Among Union Territories**, Ladakh had 28.3% women in police, while Jammu and Kashmir had just 3.3%.

Why is India



Source: The Hindu

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[19. Spotlight again on Doklam: India-Bhutan relationship and why China remains the dragon in the room](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Spotlight again on Doklam: India-Bhutan relationship and why China remains the dragon in the room**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on **8th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance– India and Bhutan relationship

News– Recently, Bhutan’s King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck visited India.

What are recent developments in Bhutan-China relations?

In an interview, Prime Minister Tshering said Bhutan and China had come to understand each other and were close to **resolving their boundary disputes**.

Tshering denied there were **Chinese incursions** in Bhutan’s territory. There exist **no Chinese installations** in Bhutan and there is **no intrusion** in the Bhutan territory.

As per Bhutan PM, Doklam is a **junction point** between India, China, and Bhutan. It is not up to Bhutan alone to solve the problem. There are three equal countries, each counting for a third.

As soon as the other two parties are also ready, Bhutan is ready to discuss the border dispute.

The two sides have agreed to simultaneously push forward the implementation of all the steps of the **Three-Step Roadmap**.

The “**Three-Step Roadmap for Expediting the China-Bhutan Boundary Negotiations**” refers to an agreement reached between the two countries in April 2021.

The two sides have also agreed to increase the **frequency of the Expert Group Meetings** and to keep contact through diplomatic channels.

In January, Bhutan and China had held **talks in Kunming** as part of an ongoing dialogue on the border issue.

Kunming talks focussed on Doklam and areas near the **India-Bhutan-China trijunction** in the west, and the **Jakarlung and Pasamlung pasturelands** in the north.

What is the Indian position on Bhutan and Doklam issue?

Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra reiterated that Tshering had not said anything different from India’s own position on this issue.

S Jaishankar in 2017-18 referred to the “**Common Understanding**” reached between the **Special Representatives** of New Delhi and Beijing. As per it, **trijunction boundary points** would be finalised in consultation with those third countries.

India holds that the 2017 Chinese actions in Doklam amounted to an attempt to change the **Bhutan-China border unilaterally**. Therefore, it violated two **agreements with Bhutan in 1988 and 1998**.

New Delhi has always held that an agreement between Bhutan and China is the **sovereign decision** of the two countries. Bhutan is mindful of Indian concerns.

There is **close consultation and coordination** between the two sides on security issues of mutual interest. This is also written into the **2007 Treaty of Friendship**.

What is the Chinese stand on Doklam?

China wants to move the **tri junction point** from **Batang La further south to Gyomochen**. It is a **violation of the 2012 agreement** with India. Control of this area would give China a **strategic advantage** over India. it will bring China closer to the “**chicken’s neck**”.

Beijing wants a **land swap** with China. It wants to get Doklam in exchange for concessions on disputed territory in the north.

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China looks at Bhutan as a **pressure point** on India. Beijing's renaming of places in Arunachal Pradesh, and its "freeze" on the visas of two Indian journalists, came during the King's visit to India.

What are the concerns of India on recent developments in Bhutan and China relations?

A China-Bhutan agreement on the boundary, especially if it includes Doklam, would have **direct and immediate implications** for India's security.

Tshering's denial of Chinese incursions in Bhutanese territory has surprised New Delhi. Chinese villages and infrastructure have come up in Doklam.

For more readings- <https://blog.forumias.com/india-bhutan-relations-and-its-significance>

20. India must be alert to China's cartographic deception in Arunachal Pradesh

Source- The post is based on the article "**India must be alert to China's cartographic deception in Arunachal Pradesh**" published in the "**The Indian Express**" on **8th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- India and China relationship

News- Recently, China renamed some places in Arunachal Pradesh.

How has China been consistently involved in cartographic deceptions?

In the early 1950s, China started indulging in **cartographic deception**. It made claims to large parts of Indian territory. The Indian leadership looked at these claims as a **negotiable misunderstanding** and trusted Zhou Enlai.

India introduced "**forward policy**" in October 1962 to assert Indian authority over territories. Nehru believed that the Chinese would never attack India. In 1959, he condemned the British Tibetan expert George Patterson for spreading rumours about the Chinese.

Presently, President Xi Jinping continues to follow the **old Maoist strategy of violating sovereign national boundaries** of neighbours using cartography as a weapon.

The recent renaming of villages, unpopulated areas, rivers and hills in Arunachal Pradesh by the State Council is another example of that cartographic deception.

Is there any basis for the Chinese historical claim over Arunachal Pradesh?

Never in known history did Arunachal Pradesh have any remote contact with China. There was never any **Chinese presence** there.

Tibetans from Lhasa used to travel to [Kolkata](#) via Sikkim and sail onwards to mainland China. At most, the Monpas of Tawang spoke Tibetan.

The only time in recent history the Chinese army came close to Arunachal Pradesh's borders was during the final years of the **Qing dynasty in 1910-12**. It entered Kham as part of a campaign to crush the revolt by the Khampas in eastern Ladakh.

Some **pro-China historians** claimed that Tawang was under the **rule of Lhasa** before 1950. The sixth Dalai Lama was born in Tawang in 1683. But, Tawang remained **largely independent** of any outside authority. Historical records also negate such claims.

Through the **Shimla Agreement** between the British and Tibetan governments in 1914, the **McMahon Line** became the international boundary between India and Tibet. Tawang fell south of the McMahon Line. The McMahon Line is branded as a "**colonial**" imposition by the Chinese.

What are the aspirations of local people of Arunachal Pradesh?

People of western Arunachal were never **subjects of any outside power**. They negotiated with the British when the latter made an outreach in the early 1900s.

After Independence, Indian administration focused on giving primacy to the **development of the region** rather than exerting authority. People in NEFA were more keen on some kind of a visible Indian authority over the region.

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When the Chinese invaded Arunachal Pradesh in October 1962, they made special efforts to convince them about the **greater racial affinity** between them. But, the Chinese couldn't win over the hearts and minds of the people of NEFA.

After the war Indian officials returned to the region in early 1963. People **extended a warm welcome**.

21. What Our Embassies Owe Indian Mothers Abroad

Source: The post is based on the article **“What Our Embassies Owe Indian Mothers Abroad”** published in **The Times of India** on **8th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Diaspora

Relevance: concerns associated with Indian parents in Europe

News: Indian families in European countries often face problems with their child being taken away by the child protection services (**CPS**). The children are put in foster care giving the reason that parents are unable to look after the child.

What is the recent case about?

A seven-month-old daughter was taken away from her parents in September 2021 by CPS in Germany because the baby suffered an injury in the perineum, the sensitive area between the vagina and the anus.

The family provided the explanation of the injury but it was rejected. The baby was put into foster care.

In February 2022, after a full investigation, police closed the case. But the baby was not restored to her parents.

Now, since CPS has not been able to prove charges of sexual abuse, **it is trying to prove that the parents, especially the mother, are incapable of looking after their baby.**

The parents' plea that the child is being deprived of her religion and culture has been dismissed by CPS as being irrelevant. Even the visiting hours of parents to their child in the foster have been cut.

CPS is pushing for the child to remain permanently in German foster care. In their opinion, the child will be unsafe if she returns to India.

The court has provided a window to the parents, the government and CPS to work out an agreement before the next scheduled hearing in May.

How has the Indian authority responded?

Usually, **the Indian Embassy does not intervene in the cases which involve criminal charges like that of sexual abuse.**

However, since the criminal charges have been taken away, it was required by the Indian Embassy to intervene into the matter.

The **intervention of the foreign ministry is absolutely crucial** in this case as the court has provided a window of agreement.

Further, **only an official governmental intervention at the highest level brought babies' back to their parents in the previous cases.**

For example, Aryan came back to his parents in Norway in 2016 with the help of then Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj and in 2011-12, the government intervention helped Sagarika to get her child back from foster care in Norway.

Therefore, the government must take urgent and required measures to bring the baby back to her parents and help other parents who are trapped in such cases.

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General Studies Paper – 3

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General Studies - 3

1. [India's fossil fuel lessons for net zero](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India’s fossil fuel lessons for net zero**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **3rd April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

News– India has faced many challenges in creating self-sufficiency. The same practices should not be repeated in the case of renewable energy.

What are the challenges India faced in the case of hydrocarbon and how can they be used as lessons for renewable energy?

1) Challenges in accessing indigenous resources– Although, India had the raw material of oil and gas. But the hydrocarbon resources are located in harsh terrain and complex geology. Which were difficult to **locate** and even if located, they were difficult to produce on a **commercial basis**. The reason is the **high cost of drilling and development**.

Similarly, it is difficult to create a world class hub for the manufacture of batteries, solar cells, wafers and modules, on the basis of availability of technical talent and capital. Process cost, due to land acquisition, erratic supplies of water and power and legal redress, needs to be minimised.

2) Issue with use of technology– The **recovery rate of oil and gas** from India’s producing fields has averaged between 25-30%, compared to world average of 40-60 per cent. it is not due to access to Enhanced oil recovery technologies. The reason is the **utilisation of these technologies, which is not** efficiently implemented.

Therefore, clean energy sector should not take the availability of tech as manufacturing competitiveness. China’s dominance in PV solar cell manufacturing is because, its engineers have been successful in implementation of the several technological steps, required to convert raw material into an end product, efficiently.

3) Incentive model– The **exploration sector** was liberalised in the expectation of more foreign investment. But, international companies shown lack of interest, stating **our geology as high risk**. India **fiscal and commercial terms** were not **internationally competitive** for them.

A similar disappointment is possible in case of the **PLI scheme for clean energy sector**. This is because the incentives offered are small compared to the benefits provided by the US through the “**inflation reduction act**” and Europe through its “**net zero industry act**”.

The US offers, for instance, subsidies up to \$10 billion or single factories. It is equivalent to total subsidy under PLI. Therefore, India cannot compete on the size of the incentive package with advanced economies. The focus should instead be to lower entry barriers, ease business conditions.

4) External dependence– Finally, India remains **dependent on the external market** for supplies of petroleum. There is no easy solution to reverse this imbalance and address its vulnerability to **unexpected supply disruptions**. However, The government has successfully diversified its supplies without involving in domestic or regional politics and conflicts.

Similarly, clean energy minerals and components are internationally available. Instead of creating **high-cost, domestic, clean energy hub dependent upon subsidies, government should strengthen the trading relationship with exporting countries**.

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2. [The Bharat 6G vision document: how India plans to lead telecommunication tech](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The Bharat 6G vision document: how India plans to lead telecommunication tech**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: About 6G Vision Document

News: The Prime Minister of India has recently unveiled the Bharat 6G Vision Document.

Why did the government put out a 6G vision document?

Assuming Leadership: The government wants to increase India’s dominance in wireless data usage and take the **lead in establishing 6G standards globally**.

It will be done through encouraging local manufacturing of telecom, supporting Indian companies and engineers in international discussions around standardization.

Avoiding Delays: The government doesn’t want to delay or stay behind the other countries in rolling out 6G as it did in 5G. **For instance**, 5G came in India years after countries like South Korea and the United States started using it.

Addressing the Demand: Frequencies increase in newer generations of networks. Hence, with the advent of 5G and 6G technologies, lower frequencies in 4G networks may not be able to match the demand for traffic.

Therefore, the government is focusing on 6G to address the demand and make people have access to better frequencies.

Developing R&D: The government wants to support research in the field of 6G technologies. It will be done through **leveraging talent in academia and companies**. **An apex body will be set up** to guide these groups through roadblocks.

Achieve connectivity goals: 6G technology will help the government in achieving connectivity goals.

For instance, ensuring that **every person has access to a minimum of 100 Mbps of broadband**, giving every **gram panchayat access to half a terabit** per second of connectivity, and **installing over 50 million internet devices across the nation**—13 per square kilometer.

Must Read: [Telecom secretary asks C-DoT to work on 6G, launches Quantum Communication Lab](#)

How are other countries approaching 6G?

[Click Here to Read](#)

Japan and Germany are working together from fundamental technologies to demonstrations on 6G technology.

What will be the benefit of 6G and what are the associated concerns?

6G will make websites load faster, videos to look better, and files to download faster than the 5G technology. However, businesses and governments are still figuring out how to best use 5G technology.

Further, **the vision document states that** satellite constellations will connect to base stations and telecom towers, thereby integrating networks and expanding them into rural areas.

However, solutions to provide connectivity to rural areas already exist in other forms. **For instance**, satellite internet in remote areas can be provided by instantly granting **administrative clearance to firms like** Elon Musk’s SpaceX and Bharti Airtel-backed OneWeb.

Hence, with the advent of satellite technologies, providing internet connectivity to rural areas is no longer a constraint.

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3. [Bot's The Problem – On the issue of Artificial Intelligence](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Bot's The Problem**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **3rd April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT, computers and robotics

Relevance– Issues related to applications of AI

News– Italy has temporarily suspended ChatGPT for data breach. It will further investigate Open AI, the maker of ChatGPT, on its data collection practices as per the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018.

Why is there a need to regulate the applications of AI?

An AI-focused ethics group in the US demanded to investigate OpenAI for **violating consumer protection rules**.

Microsoft has **integrated ChatGPT** in its search to find popular applications worldwide. It has raised **multiple ethical and legal concerns** and has shown the ChatGPT's ability to produce **mass misinformation**.

There is a need to **protect fundamental rights** in relation to **biometric applications** such as emotion recognition where machines recognise human emotions, and **AI polygraphs** where machines detect deception by individuals.

The advanced tech has **seamlessly integrated** into our lives without our recognition of their impacts. A few companies control our use of the internet, which still holds the promise of being a **democratic space**.

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

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“**Harmonize trade policy with India's broad goals**” and “**Our foreign trade policy bets on e-commerce for an export jump**” published in the **Livemint** on **3rd April 2023**.

“**Long on intent: On India's Foreign Trade Policy**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd April 2023**.

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

Relevance: About new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP).

News: Recently, India's commerce minister unveiled a new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP).

What are the salient features of India's new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP)?

Read here: [Foreign Trade Policy 2023 announced](#)

How this new FTP is different from previous ones?

No expiry date: India's previous FTP was meant for a five-year span and it has ended in March 2020. But, the new FTP has no expiry date and is open to change.

No new schemes, except the amnesty scheme: While earlier FTPs launched new schemes and incentives, this FTP is a deviation. This is because a number of India's export-linked subsidies were challenged by the US as prohibited subsidies under the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures.

India lost the case at the WTO in 2019 and had to withdraw these subsidies or replace them with WTO-compliant supports like the [Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products \(RoDTEP\) Scheme](#), which replaced the previous [Merchandise Exports from India Scheme \(MEIS\)](#).

Shift in approach: The new FTP tries to move away from an incentive-based regime towards creating an enabling ecosystem for Indian exporters. There has been a focus on the ease of doing business and facilitating the integration of Indian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with global value chains.

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What are the significant advantages of the new FTP?

Renewed push for a competitive edge overseas: The policy aims to align Indian exports with a big global e-commerce opportunity within World Trade Organization (WTO) rules.

Ensured many micro-reforms: This includes online approvals for various schemes, automation of some processes, removal of export obligations for items that go into climate action, etc. Most of these schemes including the RoDTEP, [RoSCTL \(Rebate on State and Central Taxes and Levies\)](#), AA (Advance Authorisation) and [EPCG \(Export Promotion Capital Goods\)](#) have just been tweaked. All this will ease exports and support major sectors like dairy, textiles and apparel, etc.

Export push to the e-commerce sector: This sector received substantial attention in FTP 2023 because of the sector's potential to help India to attain its export targets of \$1 trillion for goods and services by 2030.

What are the challenges India needs to address?

Export promotion does not work well with import restrictions: India's 'Make in India' aims to help local players exploit wider opportunities. In view of protecting the home base from global rivalry India still imposes many import tariffs. But, being pro-trade by trying to push exports and deter imports can pose great challenges as well.

The issue with the non-expiry policy: The non-expiry policy will grant flexibility to the government. But the Centre may term this as 'policy instability' in long run due to non-updation, especially to the changing needs of the China-plus value chains strategy.

Issues with E-commerce value limit: The policy proposes to increase the value limit for exports from ₹5 lakhs to ₹10 lakhs per consignment. This is a deterrent for exporters to use the e-commerce mode for exports of high-value consignments in sectors like gems and jewellery, handicrafts, handmade carpets and electronics.

Fails to provide roadmap: The FTP falls short in offering more substantive and sectorally targeted measures as well as a well-defined roadmap to meet the 2030 export target.

What needs to be done?

Remove value limit for e-commerce: To reach the e-commerce export target of \$200-300 billion, there should not be any value limit, as has been the practice in most of India's competing countries.

Interlink infotech systems across government departments: The new FTP did not specify the need to link the IT system of customs with that of partner government agencies like the Drug Controller General of India or FSSAI for import clearances of express/courier consignments. This is a necessity to **a)** facilitate the fast-track mobility of consignments, **b)** create a robust risk management system for end-to-end clearances.

Need data to promote district-level exports: It is important to have data/information on what kinds of goods and services are being produced in the districts and which of these have export potential. Hence, there is a need for an institutional mechanism to collect data to map food and other products from different districts.

India's isolation from the world economy has long proven a failure. As a major economy, India still punches far below its weight in world trade. Hence, the success of the new FTP is vital to improve India's stake in the world economy.

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5. [The case for an inequality boom in India is greatly exaggerated](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The case for an inequality boom in India is greatly exaggerated**” published in **Mint** on **4th April 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Inclusive Growth**

Relevance: **arguments against rising inequality**

News: Income-tax data has been placed before the Parliament. Data provides that inequality in India has increased due to the pandemic, GST, etc. The article provides a counter argument against it.

What are the views against increasing inequality?

First, Individuals whose **taxable income is less than ₹2.5 lakh are not required to file tax returns**, unless they need a refund of any tax which may have been deducted at source.

Thus, any changes observed in the pattern of the tax base in the ‘Under ₹5 lakh’ group cannot be used to measure the impact of the pandemic or other policies on the most vulnerable sections of Indian society.

Second, there has been a significant increase (13%) in the number of taxpayers in the lower-income group from 2016-17 to 2018-19. Another 11% increase was witnessed in 2018-19.

This increase was caused due to **the use of GST data, a crackdown on black-money post demonetization and the adoption of sophisticated technology by the income tax department**.

Therefore, if there would have been impact of GST and demonetization, the taxpayers would have decreased instead of increasing.

Recommendations of the 7th pay commission were also implemented in 2016-17. This caused increase in the number of government employees and pensioners in the overall taxpayer base.

Third, growth in the low-income group of taxpayers declined in 2019-20 and dropped further in 2020-21.

It is argued that decline was caused due to the demonetization and GST. However, it was **more due to an economic slowdown caused by stress in non-banking finance companies in 2019-20**.

Further, the drop of over 7% in the ‘Under ₹5 lakh’ category in 2019-20 could have also been **due to some changes in the individual tax regime**.

For instance, A new provision of tax rebate of 100% tax for those earning below ₹5 lakh with standard deduction of ₹50,000 was introduced in 2018-19.

All these changes may have had a spillover effect in 2020-21.

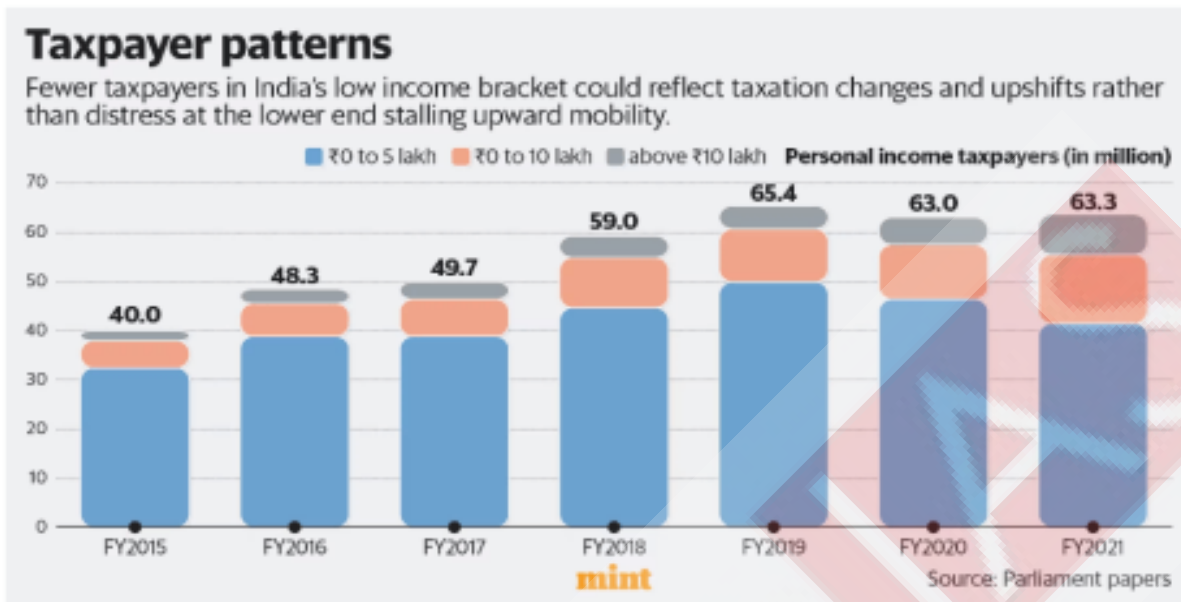
Fourth, the decline in the number of taxpayers in the lower-income group in 2020-21 should not be seen in isolation, i.e., all the changes need not mean taxpayers fell below the taxable income threshold.

They may have **shifted to the next slab of ₹5-10 lakh** which saw a 20% growth to 3 million despite the pandemic.

Fifth, the [Gini coefficient for Brazil falls when fiscal transfers such as health and education assistance](#) are taken into consideration. Similarly, it also falls for the US when federal taxes and transfers are included.

Therefore, India’s social security net is vast and expanding. When the Gini coefficient for India is calculated, it is likely to yield a lower estimate of income inequality.

Must Read: [Tackle The Four Trojan Horses Of Inequality](#)



Source: Mint

6. [Time to put a price on carbon emissions](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Time to put a price on carbon emissions” published in “The Hindu” on 4th April 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issues related to climate change

News- The article explains the pricing carbon strategy to fight climate change.

What are the different ways of pricing carbon?

The **establishment of a carbon tax** domestically. Examples are Korea and Singapore.

The **use of an emissions trading system**. It is prevalent in the European Union and China.

The application of an **import tariff on the carbon content**. The EU is proposing it.

Why has the carbon tax not been successful in fighting climate change?

Around 46 countries price carbon at an **average price of only \$6 a ton of carbon**. It covers **only 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions**, and a fraction of the estimated harm from the pollution.

The IMF has proposed price floors of \$75, \$50, and \$25 a ton of carbon for the United States, China, and India, respectively. It believes this could help achieve a **23% reduction in global emissions by 2030**.

What are the benefits of carbon pricing?

The **economy-wide benefits** of carbon pricing generally are more than the cost it imposed on individual industries in the EU, British Columbia, Canada, and Sweden.

Carbon pricing makes **investment in renewable energy** such as solar and wind more attractive.

What is the scenario of implementation of carbon tax in India?

Carbon tax is a **good option** for India. It can directly **discourage fossil fuels**. It will lead to generation of **more revenue** which can be invested in cleaner sources of energy.

It can replace the **petroleum taxes** which are not directly aimed at emissions.

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In India, **fiscal policy** has established the **basic structures** needed to implement a carbon tax. For example, they can be integrated into **road fuel taxes**. India could start with the **IMF figure of \$25 a ton**.

What are challenges in implementation of carbon tax and how to manage them?

Industrial firms can lose their **competitive advantage** to exporters from countries with a lower carbon price.

Therefore, Companies can be allowed to use **high-quality international carbon credits** to offset up to a certain percentage of their taxable emissions. The EU excludes transport. Singapore provides vouchers for consumers hit by the utility price rise.

Enterprises that **emit high emissions** can be exempted from the carbon tax. But **output-based exemptions** will be the right strategy for doing the same.

Carbon pricing will face **political opposition**. Australia repealed the 2012 carbon tax just two years after it was instituted.

Recent months have revealed the **political pressures on decarbonization** in the EU. It had to sell millions of emission permits, causing a 10% drop in carbon prices.

Therefore, **communicating** the idea of its advantages at the societal level will be important. It will manage the political opposition.

What is the way forward for a carbon tax to fight climate change?

A high enough carbon tax across China, the U.S, India, Russia, and Japan alone could have a notable effect on global warming. it will lead to the establishment of decarbonization as a **winning development formula**.

India, as president at the G-20 summit this September, can play a lead role by **advocating global carbon pricing** in the fight against climate change.

7. [Oil production cut: Oil must not get to spoil economic expectations](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Oil must not get to spoil economic expectations”** published in the **Livemint** on **4th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources

Relevance: About Oil production cut.

News: Recently, the OPEC+ members declared a plan to cut an oil production output of over 1 million barrels per day. Though this is just about 1% of global demand, this would suffice to push up global oil prices.

Note: *Ever since the Russia-Ukraine war, oil prices are on downhill. It resulted in large parts of the world facing inflation and growth slowdowns.*

How oil production has impacted the global economy?

Oil volatility has been a geopolitical threat ever since the price increase in 1973. This was caused by a Saudi-led embargo in protest against US support for Israel. At that time, **a)** Importers suffered a shock, **b)** OPEC countries generated plenty of oil wealth and made them powerful to handle economic outcomes around the planet, **c)** Since oil is a vital commodity, its shortage has made it difficult for free-trade theory to demonstrate its benefits.

After that, almost every big recession of the past half-century in the West has been preceded by an oil upshoot (including the Great Recession).

What will be the impact of the oil production cut in India?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) estimates 6.5% retail inflation in 2022-23. This is a failure of RBI's inflation target mandate. This is because the Indian basket of oil was assumed at an average \$95 per barrel.

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To avert another miss of its target, RBI's policy approach may need to assume almost similarly adverse conditions. Regardless of special oil supply deals with Russia, India cannot count on a return to cheap oil.

Read more: [OPEC+ production cut ahead of winter puts India on a slippery slope](#)

What will be the future of oil production?

Earlier the US came to rescue the oil prices. But ever since the US shale revolution, the US itself has turned it into an oil major. But that does not result in reduced oil consumption. But **a)** The world's shift away from fossil fuels will not reduce the demand for oil at an immediate pace. Further, a push for clean energy has reduced investment in oil projects, leaving existing suppliers with an advantage, **b)** Russia's invasion of Ukraine might force the Western countries to weaponize not just oil trade, but also its financial enablers, and **c)** China's influence in oil-rich West Asia has risen, and US retreat from free trade is lowering the globalization. All these might lead to Cold War II.

Read more: [Oil Production in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to avert the impact of Oil production on the global economy?

The world needs to embrace globalization based on open-market principles and global peace. As the G20 president, India must remind the world that oil production is in everybody's interest.

Read more: [Oil slick ahead?: Opec's cut in crude output shows the futility of Western sanctions. India must brace for tougher times](#)

8. [Slower pace of state capex raises questions over extent to which public sector can drive economic momentum](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Slower pace of state capex raises questions over extent to which public sector can drive economic momentum**” published in the **Indian Express** on **4th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources

Relevance: About data on government finances.

News: Recently, the Controller General of Accounts released a report on the data on government finances.

What are the key highlights in the data on government finances?

Fiscal deficit of Centre: The Centre's fiscal deficit for 2022-23 is supposed to significantly exceed the revised estimates presented in the recent Union budget.

Data on tax collection: The Centre's gross tax collections have touched Rs 25.4 lakh crore. This is about a 12% increase over the same period last year. This is only marginally lower than the growth assumed in the revised estimates for the full financial year.

Some other data mentioned include **a)** Direct tax collections have grown at a considerably faster pace than indirect taxes, **b)** Provisional direct tax collections (net of the refunds) have exceeded the revised estimates by 0.69%, **c)** Growth in income tax has so far (April-February) outpaced corporate tax collections, **d)** Overall tax collections have grown at a slower pace than nominal GDP growth.

Data on disinvestment: The data highlighted disinvestment as a matter of concern. This is because, against a target of Rs 60,000 crore, collections at the end of February stood at Rs 38,640 (including the proceeds from the monetisation of national highways).

Read more: [Fiscal constraints – On Capital Expenditure of Government](#)

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Data on the expenditure side: Overall central government spending for the year (April-February) grew by around 11%, marginally higher than what was factored in the revised estimates.

Capital expenditure: This received a significantly higher pace of 21% increase so far. However, to achieve the target for the full year the spending will have to grow by 28% in March.

Capital expenditure by state governments: As per a report, 15 states had spent only 54% of their capital expenditure targets for 2022-23 during the first 10 months. So, to meet their targets, states would have to raise their spending by 76% in February and March.

Read more: [States have a large role in ensuring capital formation](#)

Why Capital expenditure of state governments is essential?

States' slower pace on capex raises questions about the public sector's ability to drive economic momentum. Further, their failure to meet this year's targets will also raise questions over their ability to achieve the scaled-up targets in 2023-24.

States account for a significant share of overall public sector investments. Hence, their spending is critical for driving investment activity and it should be speeded up.

Read more: [State budgets may be too optimistic about their capital expenditure](#)

9. [Our K-shaped recovery is a story that adds up](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Our K-shaped recovery is a story that adds up**" published in **Live Mint** on **5th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Inclusive Growth

Relevance: about declining tax-payers

News: The article discusses the various reasons behind declining tax-payers in India.

What are the different reasons about the decline in tax-payers in India?

The **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** data shows that all-India poverty went up during the lockdown quarter (till June 2020), but declined thereafter for four quarters.

The poverty declined due to state aid such as free food and remote employment.

However, an accurate picture of poverty caused by the pandemic is still cannot be determined by the data and statistics.

What are the findings associated with income tax data?

Income-tax data has been recently placed in the Parliament. **There are debates over the shrunken population of the income tax payer under the ₹5 lakh category.**

This group's size peaked at 50 million in 2018-19, shrank to 46.3 million in 2019-20 and then again to 41.2 million in covid-stricken 2020-21.

The arguments like **the net tax benefits and upward movement of the people** from lower slab to the next are given to justify that reduction is not due to poverty increase.

However, reasons such as **pre-pandemic distress, covid and a smaller tax base are the main reasons** behind the decline in the taxpayers.

Moreover, if there has been decline due to upward shifts and tax benefits, the shortfall still suggests a base-level income crunch, as consistent with surveys like ICE360.

Further, it is argued that **India's income Gini coefficient dropped as a result of fiscal transfers**. However, the Gini coefficient compares a huge population, so it does not become clear to know the beneficiary of the tax benefits.

It is also argued that **India had a K-shaped recovery after the pandemic**.

However, its K-shaped recovery is **more about divergent wealth rather than income**. For instance, asset prices soared and stocks portfolios made gains over the pandemic.

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Due to which, Oxfam and other reports provided that India's wealth gap is widening after the pandemic.

Must Read: [The case for an inequality boom in India is greatly exaggerated](#)

10. [A new economics for a new world](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "A new economics for a new world" published in the "The Hindu" on 5th April 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance- Issues related to economic policy and models for growth

News- The article explains the issues related to the current economic theories and practices.

What are the economic challenges faced by the Indian economy?

First is **management of inflation, interest rates, and exchange rates**. The Reserve Bank of India is expected to find a solution.

Second is **negotiating bilateral and multilateral trade agreements** that protect the interests of India's farmers and workers. For which coordination is required amongst the Ministries of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture.

Third problem is **secure employment with adequate incomes**. It involves all Ministries and all State governments.

What are the lessons for India from the Chinese growth story?

Economists agree that **more investments** will **boost growth**. Therefore, there are lessons in China's history.

China and India opened their economies to global trade around the same time. Both countries had **similar levels of industrial technologies**.

Since then, China has attracted many times more foreign investment than in India, and the incomes of its citizens have increased five times faster.

Wages in China have become much higher. So, India seems well placed to attract global investors. But Vietnam is proving to be **more attractive** than India to western and Japanese investors.

Western neo-liberal economists have attributed China's remarkable economic growth to its **free trade policies**.

However, after Vietnam's success, they rediscovered lessons from China. When both countries opened to foreign investors, they already had **high levels of human development**. Both had **universal education and good public health systems**.

Basic human development must precede growth. Moreover, incomes must be increased simultaneously to enable **more consumption and attract more investments**.

What are issues with the current paradigm of economics?

The current paradigm of economics cannot provide solutions. It is **too linear, too mathematical, too mechanical**. Economists have also separated themselves from other disciplines. They are **working in silos**.

They should break out of it and **examine the complex systems**. It will help policymakers to comprehend **complex socio-economic systems** in which many forces interact with each other.

As per current paradigm, the **number of policy instruments** must equal the **number of policy goals**. So, there is a need for **independent monetary institutions** for managing inflation, separate trade and industry specialists, and separate policies for environment management and agriculture.

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What are the steps needed to remove the inadequacy of the current economic system?

-Economists search for **global solutions**. Trade and monetary policies that fit the United States, China, Vietnam, or India will not work for others. Their needs have emerged from **their own histories**.

Economists arrive at solutions by **comparing data trends** of different countries. In their models, people are numbers. Economists do not listen to real people.

Global solutions and economic theories invented in the West have caused problems. **New solutions** are essential. The inadequacy of the current paradigm was revealed by the 2008 global financial crisis; COVID-19 pandemic; and the global climate crisis.

A new economics is required. There is a need to **change the paradigm of economics** to bring **perspectives from other systems**. India's economists must step forward and lead the changes.

11. [In controlled digital lending, the issue of public interest](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**In controlled digital lending, the issue of public interest**" published in the "The Hindu" on 5th April 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance- Issues related to intellectual property

News- There is ongoing legal tussle in the United States between four major publishers and the Internet Archive, which is a not-for-profit organization trying to build a globally accessible digital library.

What are the questions raised by the legal tussle?

It poses a fundamental question about the **interface of copyright law and technological advancements**.

The publishers have argued that the Internet Archives has violated the **diverse rights provided under copyright law**.

The Internet Archives has argued that books under copyright protection are lent only in a **regulated manner**, through **Controlled Digital Lending**. It is not a violation of United States copyright law.

What is the Controlled Digital Lending used by Internet Archives?

The Internet Archive CDL model follows the **lending approach** generally seen in physical libraries. If one copy is owned by the physical library, that copy can be loaned to one person at a time. So, the Internet Archives use **one digital copy** of each non circulating print book it has stored.

Internet Archives count only one additional copy per library for the purpose of digital lending. It is irrespective of the number of physical copies of that book owned by libraries participating in the IA's digitisation.

How is CDL beneficial for larger public interest?

Lending physical copies of books from libraries has been on the decline. But the demand for reading books is not going down. Rather, people's **reading habits** are changing. Today, many people prefer to read books on devices such as their smartphones and tablets.

The CDL is a positive response to this trend. It helps **bridge the gap** between urban and rural, and the privileged and unprivileged. It allows even people in the remotest villages to access books from libraries that are far away.

CDL initiatives **ease access to many books** that may have gone out of print or may not be available to access in many physical libraries.

CDL has enormous **public benefits for education, research, and cultural participation**.

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What is the scenario of CDL in India?

India is yet to have a major CDL initiative. Some universities such as the NLSIU have initiated **major digitisation projects** that can facilitate CDL in future.

The outcome in the IA litigation will have considerable impacts on such initiatives in India.

What is the ultimate conclusion?

The copyright system is not just about protecting the **interests of copyright holders**. It is equally about **protecting the rights of the users of copyrighted works**, and the **broader public interest**.

12. [Foreign Trade Policy 2023: Old policy for new world](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Foreign Trade Policy 2023: Old policy for new world”** published in the **Indian Express** on **5th April 2023**.

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

Relevance: About new Foreign Trade Policy 2023 (FTP 2023).

News: Recently, India’s commerce minister unveiled a new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP).

About the legal status of FTP in India

The FTP is notified by the Central Government, in the exercise of powers conferred under Section 5 of the Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act, 1992.

The Act empower the Centre to “make provision for the development and regulation of foreign trade by facilitating imports and increasing exports” and to “make provision for prohibiting, restricting or otherwise regulating... import or export of goods or services or technology”.

What are the salient features of India’s FTP 2023?

Read here: [Foreign Trade Policy 2023 announced](#)

How this FTP 2023 is different from previous ones?

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

What are the challenges associated with the FTP 2023?

Non-updation of Act reflect in FTP: The 1992 Act was set in the 20th-century mindset of regulating and restricting trade and accordingly included trade policy instruments. For example, the framework of trade policy in the 21st century has since moved towards the development and facilitation of trade, but there is no reflection of this in FTP 2023. Instead, the FTP 2023 is a compilation of “Foreign Trade Procedures” in which the words, regulate, prohibit, and restrict find more mentions than “facilitate”.

Not focusing on product and process standards: Most countries moved away from export incentives. Instead, they rely on improvements in product quality and production efficiencies coupled with rapid infusion of technology to expand their presence in global markets. This highlights that product and process standards are the new trade policy instruments. For example, the negotiating draft of the EU includes many of these regulatory standards. But the FTP 2023 still relies on export incentives.

The role of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT): The DGFT’s primary role would have to be that of a facilitator while the regulatory functions should be reduced with effectiveness. But, FTP 2023 still make the DGFT to continue playing the role of imposing import “prohibitions” or “restrictions”.

Not addressing the weakness of the RoDTEP Scheme: The Rajya Sabha’s Standing Committee on Commerce examined the RoDTEP Scheme and found several weaknesses. The major one was about the rates of remission of duties which were lower than desirable. The FTP has failed to address these lacunae.

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Not address the key issues with developing districts as export hubs: The FTP 2023 is missing a commitment to support the critical component of such a programme, namely, efficient infrastructure.

Inclusion of e-commerce might send wrong signals: India has opposed a) WTO discussions on e-commerce for extending the rules of the organisation and b) Data portability demands of advanced economies. But the inclusion of e-commerce in FTP might imply that India is ready to engage in the WTO.

Must read: [India's New Foreign Trade Policy \(FTP\) and its significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

13. [The obstacles against humane policing](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The obstacles against humane policing**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **6th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance– Issues related to policing

News– The serious complaint of human rights violation recently against an IPS officer in Ambasamudram in south Tamil Nadu.

How is policing behaviour across the different countries of the world?

The U.S. has many instances of **police torture**. The death of 46-year-old an African-American George Floyd following physical torture is recent example.

Police handling of the public is more civilised in most of Europe.

A large number of cases of torture have also **gone unreported**. This largely constitutes assaults on women. Only about 10% of complaints are believed to have been registered.

What are future expectations about a more humane and civilised police force in India?

First, one of the main reasons for inhumane policing is **corruption among public servants**. It has increased in recent times. **Personal costs** involved for crusaders against corruption are increasing by the day. This is responsible for lack of **public outrage** against corruption.

Second, average policeman is subjected to **high stress**. The pressure to produce results has been on the rise.

Third, our country has large police forces. **Disseminating the message of ethics** to the lower hierarchy of such a large force is a difficult task.

How is the philosophy of some political actors about policing responsible for uncivilised behaviour by police?

Many political actors believe that **without physical force** on misbehaving citizens, the **quality of policing** cannot improve and law and order cannot be maintained.

The **tough stand of some Chief Ministers** has encouraged police leadership for **human rights transgressions**. They have preached the use of **third-degree and extra-legal methods**. The consequence is incidents like Ambasamudram.

What is the way forward for civilised police?

Solid training in ethics at the time of induction is not enough. The **pressures in the field** are so enormous that the **impact of ethical education** will evaporate quickly.

DGPs and IGP have a crucial role in indoctrinating young recruits on the value of sticking to the **law and civilised behaviour**.

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14. [The NPCI's new circular on levy charges](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The NPCI's new circular on levy charges**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economy

Relevance: About Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs)

News: The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) last week issued a circular to banks directing to levy charges up to 1.1% on merchant transactions made through Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs) wallets using UPI.

What are PPIs?

[Click Here to Read](#)

Mobile wallet is the most prevalent form of PPI used in the country. The wallet must be pre-loaded by users with the intended quantity. **PPIs can only be used in Indian rupees.**

The amount can be loaded/reloaded against cash or through debit to bank account, or by using credit/debit cards, UPI, or any other approved payment method in India.

What is PPI interoperability?

Previously, in order to use PPI at any merchant, the concerned merchant had to be directly involved with the particular PPI provider. Transactions were not possible using PPIs with which the merchant did not have a direct tie-up.

These restrictions made the PPI wallets to be only used at specific locations. **For example**, a Paytm wallet could only be used at merchants that accepted Paytm QR codes.

However, the RBI has mandated **interoperability among different PPI issuers** to overcome this limitation.

PPI issuers have now tied-up with NPCI for issuing **(a)** interoperable RuPay PPI cards or **(b)** creating interoperable wallets on UPI platforms.

As a result, prepaid instruments in the form of wallets can be linked to UPI, creating interoperable wallets on UPI platforms.

How does PPI interoperability through UPI work?

Once PPI wallet is linked to UPI, customers can transact using **Scan and Pay on all UPI interoperable QR codes.**

This will enable the use of PPI wallets at all merchant locations and the user can also send/receive money to any other wallet user. Similarly, a merchant with any UPI QR code can now accept payments from any PPI issuer or mobile wallet.

This interoperability will **speed up the growth of merchant transactions in rural areas and deepen digital financial inclusion** by allowing its use at various places such as healthcare, transit, education, utility bills, etc.

Are there any charges paid by users and merchants doing wallet transactions on UPI?

No charges are applicable if a merchant is accepting UPI payments from a customer's bank account. Charges are applicable only if the transactions above Rs 2000 are made using PPI Wallet.

Read More: [UPI transaction fee: Do prepaid cards, wallets stand to lose?](#)

15. [Trading forests for trees](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Trading forests for trees” published in [The Indian Express](#) on **6th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2/3 – Governance, Environment

Relevance: concerns associated with the **Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023**.

News: The government has introduced The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 to make changes in The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

What are the objectives of the bill?

The bill aims to **build forest carbon stock by raising plantations**. It also aims to **provide developers with land so they can fulfil their legal duty to plant trees as compensation for diverting forest land for development projects**.

The bill tries to achieve these objectives by restricting the applicability of the FC Act, and by freeing up unrecorded forests land.

What are the concerns with the Bill?

Limited Application: The **SC in 1996**, ruled that the FC Act would apply to all land parcels that were either recorded as forest or resembled the dictionary meaning of forest. This order checked rampant deforestation on land not recorded as forest.

However, **the bill seeks to limit the applicability of the FC Act only to land recorded as ‘forest’**.

This might affect millions of hectares of land (**roughly the size of Gujarat**) that have the characteristics of forests, but are not notified as such.

Clearance for the Projects: Restricting the scope of the FC Act will make **fewer projects to obtain forest clearance**.

One important requirement for forest clearance is that a developer must plant trees as compensation on an area of equivalent non-forest land or, in the absence of such land, plant trees on degraded forest land twice the forest area diverted.

However, the **amendment in [Forest Conservation Rules](#)** in June 2022, allowed developers to raise plantations over land **on which the FC Act is not applicable** and to exchange such areas for future needs for compensatory afforestation.

Since the bill limits the scope of FC Act only to the forest areas, **non-forest lands may be used to promote the development of private plantations, to gain forest clearance**.

This **will generate two problems such as losing unrecorded forests to plantations which will subsequently help to divert recorded forests for projects**.

Expanding Exemptions: The Bill proposes to expand the exemptions and make them part of the Act itself.

The Bill **seeks to exempt all strategic projects of national importance and concerning national security** within 100 km of international borders, the LAC, and the Line of Control (LoC).

This bill proposed to **extend the construction of defence related projects or a camp for paramilitary forces requiring more than 5 hectares of forest land in a Left-Wing Extremism affected area**, as specified by the Central Government.

It also seeks to **exempt security-related infrastructure requiring up to 10 hectares of forest land**, without defining its scope.

Forest Communities: The Bill talks about keeping up with dynamic changes in the ecological, strategic and economic aspirations of the country and **improvement of livelihoods for forest-dependent communities**.

However, the consent of forest communities on the diversion of forest land for development projects has been diminishing even after the enactment of the [Forest Rights Act, 2006](#).

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Now, with these amendments in the FC Act, **they may have no say on the extensive plantations** done on land on which they depend as communities.

16. [Our new foreign trade policy is transformational and futuristic](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Our new foreign trade policy is transformational and futuristic**” published in the **Livemint** on **6th April 2023**.

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

Relevance: About new Foreign Trade Policy 2023 (FTP 2023).

News: Recently, the government unveiled a new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP).

What are the salient features of India’s FTP 2023?

Lending export competitiveness to Indian products is the key focus of the new policy. It aims to ease taxation and operations along the entire trade cycle.

Read here: [Foreign Trade Policy 2023 announced](#)

How this FTP 2023 is different from previous ones?

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

What are the challenges associated with the FTP 2023?

Read here: [Foreign Trade Policy 2023: Old policy for new world](#)

What are the potential benefits of the FTP?

-Targeted interventions have already resulted in exports of electronic goods jumping by 162% from \$6 billion in 2015-16 to \$16 billion in 2021-22, of engineering goods by 81% and of toys by 89%. The FTP will further improve this.

-Expanding India’s self-rationing scheme for fixing input-output norms to two-star and above status holders will reduce operational hassles for exporters. The export-performance threshold for recognition of status has also lowered significantly.

-India is the world’s largest milk producer, with a 24% global share of milk production but less than 0.5 % of world dairy exports. So, special measures have been taken to support the dairy industry in upgrading technology through an exemption from export obligations.

-The latest FTP provides for reduced export obligations for battery electric vehicles, vertical farming equipment, wastewater treatment and recycling, rainwater harvesting systems and green-technology products. This will promote sustainability and climate change mitigation.

-Internationalization of trade in the Indian rupee will also promote exports.

-The FTP encourages active participation by Indian states and also Indian missions abroad for market identification, facilitating the entry of Indian products to overseas markets, marking a strategic transformation in India’s export strategy.

Must read: [India’s New Foreign Trade Policy \(FTP\) and its significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

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17. [India's trade stance remains a little too protectionism happy](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**India's trade stance remains a little too protectionism happy**” published in the “**mint**” on **7th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance- Issues related to trade policy

News- Recently, the government unveiled a new Foreign Trade Policy

What are issues with the recently released new trade policy?

The policy is a **recitation of the laws and processes** that regulate Indian trade. It makes no real effort to engage with the policy issues at stake.

No attempt has been made to explain how New Delhi views **global economic systems** and India's place in them.

Multinational companies are **reorienting supply chains** to reduce their dependence on China. India is a more reliable commercial partner for the West. Trade policy does not contain the strategy for **relocating supply chains** to India .

It is not looking for ways to **build trust** with trading partners such as Japan. how to share the **burdens of global sourcing and supply** to promote a **shared economic security**.

What are the reasons behind lack of focus on trade related issues among policymakers?

India's approach to trade remains **incoherent and contradictory**. Indian policymakers no longer seem to believe India can become a **great trading nation**.

Policymakers at the highest level are keen to debate **geopolitical shifts**. But in case of trade, decision-making is left to **middle-level bureaucrats or to chambers of commerce**. This is odd because geopolitics and trade policy have become **intimately connected** today.

What are other issues with the foreign trade strategy of India?

India is offering **halfhearted incentives** for manufacturers to shift their operations to India. It is offering \$10 billion for semiconductor subsidies while the US plans \$40 billion.

There is a **lack of political will**. They cannot promise that India will become part of the **redirected, resilient supply chains** that investors in Japan and the West want to build.

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

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“**Express View on IT Rules amendments: Government sets itself up as judge, jury and executioner**” published in the **Indian Express** on **8th April 2023**.

“**What's 'Misleading'? – Why GoI fact-checking unit can become problematic**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th April 2023**.

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

Relevance: About amendments to IT Rules.

News: The government recently notified amendments to Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules.

About the amendments to IT Rules

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

What are the concerns associated with amendments to IT Rules?

Censorship of the press: Media is already regulated by laws, including defamation. Therefore, legal boundaries for the media exist.

But the new amendments provide unbridled and unchecked powers to the government for deciding what can be published and what cannot. This undermines media freedom further.

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Short-circuits Court judgements: 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.

Issues in regulating intermediaries: Intermediaries are one of the gateways to accessing work by the media. Therefore, any arbitrary restrictions on them may affect public access to news.

Not clearly defined: The amendments are not clear on terms such as “misleading”. For example, the facts of a media report can be beyond reproach. However, if the fact-checking unit finds the narrative ‘problematic’, the intermediary can be ordered to take it down as it’s “misleading”

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.

High chance of misuse: The government applied the laws with weaponising trends to curb opposition and dissent. Hence, the present amendment might lead to the same.

What should be done?

The government should think over the consequences if states use grey areas in the law to regulate media. The government has to follow the recent SC judgment ensuring Freedom of Press and should allow media to work without hindrance, as it is essential for democracy.

19. [Science for all – LIGO-India must contribute to the communities it needs sustenance from](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Science for all – LIGO-India must contribute to the communities it needs sustenance from**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th April 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the LIGO-India project.

News: The Union Cabinet has recently granted permission to set up a gravitational-wave detection facility (LIGO-India) in Maharashtra.

What are Gravitational waves?

Read here: [What are Gravitational waves?](#)

About LIGO-India project

The project will consist of a detector called the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO). It is built in the image of the twin LIGO instruments already operational in the U.S.

After the detection of gravitational waves in 2016, a third detector is being built in India as part of the LIGO-India collaboration. This is to improve the detectors’ collective ability to pinpoint sources of gravitational waves in the sky.

Read more: [Scientists to test land for LIGO](#)

What are the benefits of approving the LIGO-India project?

a) India could become a global site of gravitational physics research, **b)** India can aid training and the handling of precision technologies and sophisticated control systems. Thereby, cementing a reputation for successfully running an experimental Big Science project, **c)** LIGO-India can demonstrate India’s ability to pursue research and enhances Indian society’s relationship with science.

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What are the challenges in implementing the LIGO-India project?

The prior scientific projects of India faced severe hardships. Such as [Challakere Science City](#) and the stalled [India-based Neutrino Observatory \(INO\)](#). This is because

Science projects need large land tracts, with inevitable implications for land-use change:

Science projects have to contest land rights, balance the sustainable use of natural resources, meet carbon sequestration targets, and enforce human rights.

In some areas, science projects are seen as an “agent of colonisation”. For instance, Hawaii’s Thirty Meter Telescope is to be built on land the locals hold sacred. Hence, they have to balance the interplay between the history of science and settler colonialism.

Science projects in developing countries: In the economically developing world, countries like India have the responsibility to define their public value, beyond benefits to national industry and research.

What should be done?

-The government has to ensure adequate access to land and other resources and conduct public outreach programmes for the success of the LIGO-India project. The government has to make clear what the LIGO-India project can provide for the nation.

-The government has to ensure the timely release of funds for construction, followed by issuing the allocated resources without delay.

20. [‘India is well within its right to ensure quality’](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India is well within its right to ensure quality**” published in the “**mint**” on **8th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance– Issue related to trade

News– several WTO members objected to India issuing quality control orders(QCO) for products of mass consumption, such as machinery safety equipment, pressure cookers, toys and air conditioners, to curb a Chinese import surge and boost exports.

Is the quality control order compliant with WTO provisions?

QCOs are **first applied in the domestic market** and only then are they **imposed on imports**. So, India has **rights to bring QCOs**.

western countries impose quality norms on our products. So, India is **duty-bound to retaliate** by imposing QCOs on their products. According to **WTO rules**, members should use **similar standards** for domestic as well

QCOs cannot be challenged at WTO if they are imposed on **grounds of health, safety, environment and deceptive trade practice, or national security**. The Centre argued that cheap quality products from other countries pose a health risk for children in India.

What is the rationale behind issuing quality control orders by the Indian government?

QCOs are increasingly being used by the government to curb the **dumping of cheap products from China amid the widening trade deficit**. It is nearly 40% of the total deficit. India has a total deficit of \$87.5 billion.

India lags in terms of **international standards**. It must ramp up its **focus on quality** to make the best of **free trade agreements** and take advantage of the **China-plus-one strategy** adopted by the West.

21. [Some advice to India on the IFA negotiations](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Some advice to India on the IFA negotiations**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **8th April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy. GS2- Important international institutions

Relevance– Issues related to WTO working.

News– World Trade Organization is working on investment facilitation agreement (IFA). It is backed by more than 100 countries.

What are the issues with investment facilitation agreement?

There are apprehension that foreign investors could use IFA to bring claims under the existing BITs. Foreign investors may use the **most favoured nation provision in BITs** to use provisions in IFA perceived to be more beneficial than provisions of underlying BIT.

The foreign investor may use the provision of **fair and equitable treatment (FET)** present in BITs to challenge **non-compliance with IFA**.

Older investment treaties rarely explain the meaning of the FET provision. It allows **ISDS tribunals** to provide its interpretation. Tribunals have held that the **FET provision** includes **investors’ legitimate expectations**. The foreign investor may argue that the commitments undertaken by a state under the IFA create ‘legitimate expectations’ of the investor.

Another provision of the IFA that allows the use of ISDS mechanism can be the so-called **umbrella clause**. It is a BIT clause that allows contractual and other commitments owed to a foreign investor to be brought under the **treaty’s protective umbrella**.

Why is the ISDS arbitration tribunal unlikely to agree with the investor if a foreign investor brings such claims?

Many BITs exempt an **economic integration agreement** from the **application of MFN**. Thus, the possibility of foreign investors successfully importing IFA provisions into the BIT is remote. It is doubtful that an ISDS tribunal will accept the argument that mere **non-compliance with IFA** breaches an **investor’s legitimate expectations**.

Most new investment treaties avoid ‘**umbrella clauses**’ altogether. This limits the possibility of investors suing states for **non-compliance of IFA obligations** as a breach of a BIT’s ‘umbrella clause’.

What is the way forward for success for investment facilitation agreement?

The IFA cannot bind an ISDS tribunal. For the ISDS tribunal, the IFA is just another **international law instrument** that must be **interpreted and applied** in accordance with the **context of the relevant BIT**.

Countries can overcome this problem by amending their respective BITs to **exclude the IFA from its scope**.

The possibility of an ISDS tribunal **interpreting provisions broadly** can never be ruled out. But this cannot be a basis to **oppose international lawmaking**.

India should not be opposed to joining the IFA negotiations at the WTO due to fear of **ISDS claims**.