



9 PM

Compilation

20th to 25th March, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. [Notes on urban prosperity](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Notes on urban prosperity” published in **Business Standard** on 23rd March 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Urbanization

Relevance: problems with Urbanization

News: The article discusses the problems with urbanization and measures that can be adopted to make urban cities prosper.

What are the problems with urbanisation?

Cities have become an important point of change, growth and provide creative solutions to national agendas as well as regional and global development.

However, **long-term sustainable urban prosperity has been reduced by insufficient planning, absence of effective governance and legal frameworks**, unstable institutions, and the absence of a credible monitoring system.

Hence, the economic benefits of a city such as rise in the price of land and assets cannot be utilized well until the gains of urbanisation and value generated are not redistributed among citizens equitably.

According to **the UN-Habitat’s World Cities Report (Envisaging the Future of Cities)**, a vision of fair “urban futures” cannot be realized unless we adopt inclusive and decisive efforts toward sustainable solutions to urban difficulties.

Must Read: [India@100: What’s ahead for urbanisation?](#)

What measures can be adopted to bring urban prosperity?

Cities’ developments are mostly looked at in terms of GDP. However, **its measure must be directed towards making urban environments more resilient** so that urban prosperity comes in line with sustainable goals.

Some of the efforts taken in this direction are – the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change**.

Further, creating urban resilience is a multi-faceted, multi-stakeholder process that requires more intensive actions.

Therefore, to realize the positive vision of urban futures, ambition must be shifted **from gradual urban transitions to large urban changes** along with bridging the gap between ambitious city visions and action plans to achieve the goals.

However, it is also necessary to recognize, measure, and operationalize urban resilience gaps and policies for proper administration. These need to be addressed by the various local government units.

For measuring such parameters, **the City Resilience Index (CRI)** might be useful. It was created with the intention that all member cities will adopt and use it as a tool to track changes in overall resilience over time.

Further, in order to create a climate-resilient world, **urban economic activity should be made in such a way that it promotes renewable energy, circular economic activity, and green employment**.

The various forms of capital (natural, sociocultural, human, economic, and physical) should be handled through systemic thinking that promotes fairness, justice, co-production, governance, and regeneration.

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What can be the way ahead?

Rapid urbanization has resulted in the growth of outer urban areas in the shape of megacities, hyper cities, that are inefficient in terms of energy usage, environmental sustainability, and economic performance.

Therefore, there is a need for a more **comprehensive approach which addresses – a) the pillars of sustainable development** by emphasizing the economic role of cities in national growth and recognizing the economic possibilities they provide and **b) global environmental challenges like** climate change, unsustainable energy consumption, and water scarcity to ensure ease of living for its people.

General Studies Paper –2

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General Studies - 2

1. [Japan's PM Fumio Kishida writes: Japan and India renewing a pledge](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Japan’s PM Fumio Kishida writes: Japan and India renewing a pledge” published in “The Indian Express” on 20th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- India and Japan bilateral relationship

News- Japan PM is visiting India for the second time.

What is the importance of the bilateral relationship between India and Japan?

Close coordination between India and Japan as **leading democracies of Asia** are the cornerstones of **peace and prosperity in the region**.

The bilateral relationship between our two countries is **multi-layered**. It is based on **shared values and principles of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law**. Both have **shared vision of Free and Open Indo-Pacific**.

Today, the international community is at a **historic turning point**. Its impact, such as the food crisis and soaring fertiliser prices, are also being felt here in the Indo-Pacific region.

As Japan and India assume the **Presidencies of the G7 and the G20** respectively this year, cooperation between them is important for the region.

In the context of the Ukraine war, both have sought a **peaceful resolution based on international law**.

What are potential areas of cooperation between India and Japan?

Japan-India relations have advanced in various fields. Japan is important partner in the **high-speed railway project** in India

Japan has the target of **5 trillion Yen of public and private investment and financing** from Japan to India in the next five years. This was announced by our two governments last year.

Smart city projects by India, share high compatibility with **Japan’s Vision for a Digital Garden City Nation Realisation**.

Japan is cooperating in the **development of the north-eastern region** of India by increasing connectivity with the surrounding regions.

What is the shared vision of Free and Open Indo-Pacific between India and Japan?

FOIP is a **vision shared by Japan and India**. It has gained support and endorsement of the international community and led to the **mainstreaming of the “Indo-Pacific”**.

FOIP is even more relevant at a time when Japan and India aim to pursue the **shared goal** of leading the international community towards **cooperation rather than division and confrontation**.

2. [Whether in Maharashtra or Jharkhand, governors are unelected – they must stay away from politics](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Whether in Maharashtra or Jharkhand, governors are unelected – they must stay away from politics” published in “The Indian Express” on 20th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive

Relevance- Office of governor

News- In the ongoing disqualification proceedings against Maharashtra MLAs in the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice of India has made hard-hitting remarks about the **role and powers of a governor**.

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CJI severely criticised the Maharashtra governor's actions and raised questions about the **legitimacy and limits of a governor's role** in this case. The CJI observed that the governor should not **enter the political arena**.

What are recent examples of governors exceeding their authority?

Recently, R N Ravi, the Tamil Nadu governor skipped certain parts of his speech. He omitted words such as **secularism, Periyar and B R Ambedkar**. He further made denigrating remarks stating that the **Dravidian model is regressive politics**.

Former Jharkhand governor Ramesh Bais **withheld the opinion of the Election Commission** in Hemant Soren's office of profit case and did not act on it.

In fact, he violated **Article 192(2) of the Constitution**, which says that he "shall act" according to such opinion. The Constitution has mandated the word of EC to be **final in the matter of disqualification** in an **office of profit case**.

What is the way forward for the office of governor?

As an unelected appointee of the Centre, the governor is expected to **not get involved in political controversies or ideological rifts**. He must be **non-partisan**. She should not turn confrontational.

It is also necessary to **restrict the discretionary powers of the governor**. A **politically-active and partisan governor** can usurp the power of elected representatives.

A hung mandate becomes a fertile ground for some governors who are puppet in the hands of Centre. Laying down a clear procedure in cases of a hung mandate is necessary.

The **Justice Sarkaria Commission** had recommended the following order to be followed by a governor in cases of a hung assembly: 1. An alliance of parties that was formed prior to the elections;

1. The single largest party staking a claim to form the government with the support of others, including independents.
2. A post-electoral coalition of parties, with all the partners in the coalition joining the government;
3. a post-electoral alliance of parties, with some of the parties in the alliance forming a government and the remaining parties, including independents, supporting the government from outside.

Justice Punchhi Committee (2007) reiterated the recommendations. There is a need to **design institutional safeguards** to ensure that governors do not cross the Lakshman Rekha.

3. [Moving forward with a newer concept of UHC](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "Moving forward with a newer concept of UHC" published in "The Hindu" on 20th March 2023.

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

Relevance- Issues related to universal healthcare

News- The article discusses the new approach needed to ensure healthcare for all and weakness of earlier approaches.

What is the World Health Organization definition of health?

It is the **totality of health**. It includes **mental and social well being and happiness**, and an **absence of disease and disability**. It calls for addressing the **health determinants**.

This necessitates a need for an **intersectoral convergence** between departments such as women and child development, food and nutrition, agriculture and animal husbandry, civil supplies, rural water supply and sanitation, social welfare, tribal welfare, education, forestry.

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What are some facts related to Universal Health Care?

It was proposed by Halfdan Mahler and endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 1977. It means **universalisation of healthcare**.

Nobody is denied this. Everybody is eligible without being **discriminated against** on the basis of financial status, gender, race, place of residence, affordability to pay or any other factors.

India, through its **National Health Policy 1983**, committed itself to the '**Health for All**' goal by **2000**.

How did partial coverage of the population and partial responsibility of the ruling government to pay for health care come into picture?

The **International Conference on Primary Health Care, at Alma Ata in 1978** listed **eight components of minimum care** for all citizens.

It mandated **all health promotion activities, and the prevention of diseases**. It includes **vaccinations and treatment of minor illnesses and accidents**. These should be free for all using government resources, especially for the poor.

Any **non-communicable disease**, and its treatment were almost excluded from primary health care.

Secondary and tertiary care was left to the individual. They could either seek it from a limited number of public hospitals or from the private sector.

What were the consequences of this approach?

There were not enough government run institutions for the poor. This **abdication of responsibility** to provide secondary or tertiary care by the state has some consequences.

It ensured the growth of the **dominant, unregulated, profit making private sector** and also the health insurance sector

This created a **dichotomy between peripheral primary and institutional preferred specialist care** at the secondary and tertiary levels.

What is the way forward to ensure healthcare for all?

There is a need for a **newer concept of UHC**. It should encompass **primary, secondary and tertiary care** for all who need it at affordable cost without discrimination.

The **Universal Health Coverage slogan** must be avoided. It is **neither universal in its implementation nor comprehensive** in its coverage of services. It never assures **accessibility or affordability**.

Every individual has a **right to health**. That right is guaranteed only by **individualism in public health**. It is a new global approach to UHC.

The World Health Assembly resolution of 2011 urges countries for timely finance of the health sector to reduce out of pocket expenses. The **Astana declaration of 2018** calls for **"partnership" with the private sector**.

A globally accepted health systems concept has emerged since the **Beijing Health Systems Research Conference 2012**. It is a **multimodal system of varied sectors, professional streams and specialities** with a variety of staff to deliver **Comprehensive Universal Health Care**.

The **National Health Mission with concurrent intersectoral thrusts** on Poshan Abhiyan, National Food Security, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, water sanitation, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a better model of fully tax funded Universal Health Care. But the Ayushman Bharat Jan Arogya Bhima Yojana damages that approach.

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4. [Slow steps to India-China border tranquillity](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Slow steps to India-China border tranquillity” published in “The Hindu” on 20th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings

Relevance- Border dispute between India and China

News- India and China appear to be moving towards a new modus vivendi to maintain peace and tranquility along their disputed 4,000 kilometre border.

What are various attempts by two sides to ease the border situation?

The two sides managed to disengage in four of the six points — **Galwan, Pangong Tso, Gogra Post and near Jianan Pass (PP15)**. But two key areas remain unsettled- the **Depsang Bulge and the Charding Ninglung Junction in the Demchok area** involving nearly 1,000 square kilometres.

Important discussions took place at the 26th Meeting of the **Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on China--India Border Affairs**. The two sides discussed other measures to further ease the border situation.

Upgrading the border management means to replace the WMCC with a mechanism that will have both military and civilian officers.

What could be other measures that can restore a measure of normality on border areas?

It includes converting other parts of the LAC into similar **no--patrol zones**. This could lead to a package settlement in the two remaining areas of Depsang and Charding Nala.

No-patrol zones could be confined to the places where the two sides have **overlapping claims**. Till 2020, both sides patrolled till the limit of these contending claims.

There was a protocol that if the two patrols met, they would display banners to ask the other side to go back to their area. Thereafter, the issue was dealt with through meetings.

Chinese journalist scholar Qian Feng suggested that the concept of the **“zone of actual control” could replace the “line of actual control”** in some areas that had no obvious geomorphological features or population.

Other areas, too, could be delimited as a **“border belt”** if they did not require population adjustment. It will depend on the intentions of the two interlocutors.

The idea was originally proposed by **Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai**. He proposed to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that both sides withdraw 20 kilometres from the “so called” McMahon Line, as well as the “line up to which each side exercises control in the west”.

What are the reasons for frequent border clashes between India and China?

The entire range of **confidence building measures** since 1993 was premised on the belief that both sides largely accepted the LAC. But, there were differences related to some 18-20 points on it.

The 1993 and 1996 agreements specifically spoke about the importance of identifying and resolving these differences. The Chinese did not help in defining a clear LAC without providing any good reasons.

Chinese have not **shared detailed maps** of their areas of control. That has been at the root of the problem.

Over the years, the Chinese have been able to **shift goalposts at will**, especially in relation to the Ladakh border.

What is the Indian stand on border dispute?

Foreign minister Mr. Jaishankar has emphasised that there could be **no normality in India--China ties** until the eastern Ladakh situation was resolved.

In 2014 and 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tried his level best to persuade the Chinese to **clarify the LAC** at the points where there were differences.

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5. [Who'll grade NAAC?: Complaints of wrongdoing have piled up too high. UGC & education ministry must step in](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Who'll grade NAAC?: Complaints of wrongdoing have piled up too high. UGC & education ministry must step in**” published in **The Times of India** on **21st March 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Issues Related to Education System**

Relevance: problems with National Assessment and Accreditation Committee (NAAC).

News: The article discusses the problems associated with the National Assessment and Accreditation Committee (NAAC).

What is NAAC?

[Click Here to Read](#)

What are the problems with NAAC?

There have been complaints about its **accreditation system**, i.e., they are unreliable and corrupted. **For example**, a private university has received the highest achievable grade within just over a few years of establishment.

Further, accreditation is granted to institutions for the papers they claim to have published **without questioning them** about the linkages between their research and industry.

No verifications are made for the patents won by the institutions, or about the creation of new products/procedures claimed by the institutions. **It assesses outcomes poorly**.

The **Joreel committee** has also drawn attention to the fact that NAAC depends on institutional processes for assessment rather than using scientific methods to validate the data. Hence, **NAAC is adopting opacity in its system of accreditation**.

Must Read: [The controversy over NAAC's system for assessing higher education](#)

What can be the course of action?

The education system is about to undergo a rapid transformation due to the advancement of AI and other technologies. Thus, it is necessary to evaluate the universities properly before granting them accreditation.

UGC and the education ministry must step in to check the corruption involved in the accreditation system.

6. [India as a UNSC member: Concluding on a high note, in Manhattan](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Concluding on a high note, in Manhattan**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **21st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Important international institutions

Relevance: About India as a UNSC member.

News: India has concluded its eighth stint in the United Nations Security Council at the end of December 2022.

What were the priorities for India at UNSC?

The focus was on **maritime security, terrorism, UN peacekeeping, reformed multilateralism and the Global South**.

India was elected Chair of three important UNSC Committees: **the Taliban Sanctions Committee, Libyan Sanctions Committee and Counter-terrorism Committee**.

What are the important contributions of India as a UNSC member?

Maritime issues: The Prime Minister of India chaired for the first time a UNSC meeting on maritime security. India's statement for the first time is a direct reference to the **UN Convention on the Law of the Sea**. It called it international law setting out the **legal framework** in the context of maritime activities.

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It also called for **freedom of navigation, anti-piracy and combating terror and transnational crime at sea.**

Major conflicts: In case of major conflicts over the world, the Council stood polarised and unable to act decisively. India tried to bring them on the same page.

There was a military takeover in Myanmar in 2021. India ensured **balanced and comprehensive Council pronouncements.** It finally culminated in a **resolution on Myanmar** in December 2022.

In August 2021, the Taliban forcefully seized power in Afghanistan. India was able to **steer the Negotiations.** It resulted in **UNSC Resolution 2593.** The resolution lays down benchmarks for **stopping cross-border terrorism** from Afghan soil; protecting the **rights of women, minorities and children;** ensuring an **inclusive government,** and providing **humanitarian assistance.**

During the Ukraine conflict, India took an **independent stand.** It called for **dialogue and peace.** India spoke out against such **sanctions on oil, food and fertilisers.**

Terrorism: India has enhanced its focus on terrorism. As Chair of the **UNSC Counter- terrorism Committee,** its meeting was organised in India in October 2022. India's proposal to list Abdul Rehman Makki, Deputy Chief of the Lashkar-e-Taiba under **UNSC Resolution 1267 sanctions** was approved by the UNSC.

Peacekeeping: India has been the **largest contributor to UN peacekeepers.** Its launching of the **UNITE Aware technology platform** to strengthen the **real-time protection of peacekeepers** is to be noted. In 2021, India piloted the first UNSC resolution, calling for **accountability for crimes against peacekeepers.** India gifted **two lakh vaccines** to all UN peacekeepers.

Climate change: In 2021, India thwarted a move by the West. It wanted to take out climate change from the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change** process and brought it under the ambit of the UNSC. The draft resolution was defeated in the Council when India and Russia voted against.

A change in religious extremism: India also raised the issue of a contemporary form of **religiophobia** in the Council. It condemned **phobia against Abrahamic religions** and called for the need to combat rising **hate crimes and phobias against non--Abrahamic religions.**

7. [The wide disparities in human development](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**The wide disparities in human development**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **21st March 2023.**

Syllabus: GS2- Human resources

Relevance: Human development-related issues

News: India is now one of the fastest- growing economies globally. However, this growth has not resulted in a corresponding increase in its Human Development Index.

What are some facts related to HDI?

Must read: [Human Development Index \(HDI\) and other Indices of UNDP](#)

According to the [Human Development Report of 2021--22](#), India ranks **132 out of 191 countries.** It is behind Bangladesh (129) and Sri Lanka (73).

What method is used in the current article to measure HDI?

The HDI is calculated using four indicators: **life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling, and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.**

Life expectancy estimates are taken from the **Sample Registration System.** Mean and expected years of schooling are extracted from **NFHS--5.**

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For GNI per capita, **gross state domestic product (GSDP) per capita** is used as a proxy indicator to measure the standard of living.

The methodology involves calculating the **geometric mean of the normalised indices** for the three dimensions of human development. HDI scores **range from 0 to 1**. Higher values indicate higher levels of human development.

What is the performance of various states on Human Development as per the methodology used in this article?

While some States have made considerable progress, others continue to struggle. Delhi occupies the top spot and Bihar occupies the bottom spot. Bihar, unlike the previous HDI reports, is no longer considered a low human development State.

The five States with the **highest HDI scores** are Delhi, Goa, Kerala, Sikkim, and Chandigarh. **Delhi and Goa** have HDI scores above 0.799, which makes them equivalent to countries in Eastern Europe with a very **high level of human development**.

Nineteen States, including Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Punjab, Telangana, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh, have scores ranging between 0.7 and 0.799. These can be classified as **high human development States**.

The bottom five States are Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Assam, with medium levels of human development. This category also includes States such as Odisha, Rajasthan, and West Bengal, which have **HDI scores below the national average**.

The scores of these low performing States resemble those of African countries such as Congo, Kenya, Ghana, and Namibia.

Despite having the **highest GSDP per capita** among larger States, **Gujarat and Haryana** have failed to translate this advantage into human development. They rank 21 and 10, respectively.

Kerala stands out with consistently **high HDI values** over the years. It can be attributed to its **high literacy rates, robust healthcare infrastructure, and relatively high income levels**.

The **impact of COVID--19** on subnational HDI is not captured here. It will be known when post-pandemic estimates are available.

What are the reasons for the poor performance of some states on HDI?

One of the main reasons is that economic growth has been **unevenly distributed**. The **top 10%** of the Indian population holds over **77% of the wealth**. This has resulted in significant **disparities in access to basic amenities, like healthcare and education**.

Another reason is the **quality of services** provided by the government such as health and education. For example, while the country has achieved near **universal enrolment** in primary education, the **quality of education** remains low.

What is the way forward to improve HDI?

Governments must **prioritise human development alongside economic growth** to ensure that the benefits of growth are more evenly distributed.

This requires a **multi-faceted approach**. It should **a)** address income inequality and gender inequality, **b)** Improves access to quality social services; and **c)** addresses environmental challenges.

There is a need to provide for **greater investment in social infrastructure** such as healthcare, education, and **basic household amenities** including access to clean water, improved sanitation facility, clean fuel, electricity and Internet in underdeveloped States.

India must prioritise **investments in human development and job creation**, particularly for its youth.

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8. [Opportunity for reforms at World Bank](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Opportunity for reforms at World Bank**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **21st March 2023**.

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

Relevance: Institute of global economic governance

News: With Ajay Banga nominated to be the next World Bank president, there is great hope in his abilities to revamp this vital global institution.

What are the issues with the functioning of the World Bank?

Today, the world needs a **global institution for global transformation towards a sustainable planet and promoting shared prosperity**. The WB is largely missing in action in the climate fight.

Instead, the WB is now seen as a **multi-purpose development bank** that tries to provide support to countries for their perceived needs. It does not have a **broad strategic vision**.

It used to be a **leader in thinking on economic development** but has not been able to address these issues.

WB is **overly conservative and too risk-averse** in the **use of its capital base**. It has not been able to **leverage private capital flows** for infrastructure and climate change.

It has **underutilised its guarantees and focused largely on loans**. It has not **financed insurance facilities** as much as it could have.

It’s also been criticised for being too slow. **Bureaucratic procedures** of the WB cause costly delays to its borrowers.

Its country focus has improved performance but neglects its ability to meet **global and regional financing needs**.

The WB and other regional banks now provide a small share of net flows to emerging markets. They have been **overly conservative in their equity-to-loan ratios**.

What is the way forward to improve the functioning of the World Bank?

It needs a **substantial overhaul of its objectives** and much more **innovative use of its capital base and financial instruments**.

There is a need for actions on a much larger scale internationally for **energy and ecological transformation for a more sustainable planet**.

Its new role should be as the **global institution for climate change and sustainability**. It must also be able to provide **monitoring and advice on climate action** in the entire world. These include a range of issues such as **climate adaptation, mitigation, carbon pricing, environmental, social, and corporate governance and net-zero transformation**.

It is not sufficient to create a **climate change department** in the WB to continue with a business-as-usual approach. The **entire organisation** must be transformed to make it the premier **global institution for dealing with climate change and shared prosperity**.

The WB must also shift the focus from **lending to catalysing resource flows**. It must help build the **institutions and regulatory systems**. These will help to draw in more capital from the private sector and from sovereign wealth funds.

Its success must be judged how much resources it can **catalyse to address social and physical infrastructure and climate finance needs**.

More **innovative use of its financing instruments** is needed especially in the way it books and uses guarantees and insurance backstops.

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The **International Finance Corporation**, is also a big player in private finance. It should spend much more effort on **helping develop systems for SME finance**, which can attract international capital.

The WB must continue its country-based assistance and also focus more on **global problems**. The WB has huge power to address these issues by working in **partnership with specialised agencies at the UN**. It may need new and **more innovative sources of financing** for this purpose, including green bonds.

The **WB's capital base** must also be increased, and there must also be changes to the way it uses its capital.

The emerging economies could also be allowed **more leeway in the use of capital** by changing their **capital adequacy ratios** without **hurting their credit ratings**.

9. [The stage has been set for gender equity in Digital India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“The stage has been set for gender equity in Digital India”** published in **Mint** on **22nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice

Relevance: concerns associated with digital gender divide

News: The article discusses the measures that can be adopted to reduce digital gender divide.

What are the highlights of the data?

As per the **National Family Health Survey (2019-21)**, only one in three women in India (33%) have ever used the internet, compared to more than half (57%) of men.

Men compared to women (49% vs. 25%) have used the internet twice which creates a stark digital disparity.

India is home to the largest number of women anywhere in the world. Therefore, problems that create a digital gender divide need to be addressed.

What are the reasons behind the digital gender divide?

Lack of access: Due to the low levels of digital infrastructure, internet coverage, and smartphone availability, women have less access to it than men do. The digital gender gap also widens because of gender inequality.

Digital illiteracy: The lack of digital literacy also causes gender divide. Girls with lower levels of functional literacy often cannot make optimum use of smartphones.

As per the National Family Health Survey (2019-21), 66% of women in rural areas and 59% of women across urban and rural areas in India have not finished at least 10 years of schooling. This makes them incompetent to have digital access.

Cyber safety and security: The lack of proper digital literacy makes women vulnerable to online harassment, cyberbullying and cyberstalking. The fear of these in turn leads to a digital gender gap.

Read More: [Bridging the Digital Divide](#)

What can be done to overcome the challenges of digital gender divide?

Designing digital solutions to advance gender equity: Participation of girls and women in co-creation of digital solutions will increase digital adoption and aid in bridging the digital gender divide.

Digital literacy and capacity building: Women should be provided digital literacy because it could help them in getting new knowledge and skills which in turn may help them in getting better employment opportunities.

Responsible technology: Technology should be developed in such a way that it protects user privacy and data. It should also not lead to discrimination against women. For this, **the**

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government and stakeholders need to collaborate along with educating users to act responsibly. This would ensure a safe and secure digital environment for women and girls.

What steps have been taken by the government to bridge the digital gender divide?

The government has taken various initiatives such as [Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan \(PMGDISHA\)](#), [National Digital Library for children and adolescents](#) which has also been proposed in the Union Budget 2023-24 and [Stay Safe Online campaign](#).

What can be the course of action?

Economic, social and digital empowerment for women is rising in India. Therefore, **women should be given ample opportunities to have full digital access** and technology so that they can grow, and the digital gender gap might be reduced.

10. [Japanese PM Kishida's visit to India, Chinese president Xi's trip to Moscow, and the rearrangement of great power and regional politics](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Japanese PM Kishida's visit to India, Chinese president Xi's trip to Moscow, and the rearrangement of great power and regional politics**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **22nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance– Major changes in world order and implications for India

News– Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is visiting India with ambition to elevate the Indo-Pacific partnership with India. Chinese President Xi Jinping is also visiting Moscow this week to consolidate the Eurasian alliance with the Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

What are the major changes happening in international politics?

A **recalibration of relations** among **major middle powers is happening**. Recently, there was a thaw in the relations of Iran and Saudi Arabia at a ceremony in Beijing.

The **first summit in nearly twelve years** between the leaders of South Korea and Japan was organised.

The **Saudi-Iran entente** is a **diplomatic triumph** for Beijing and a setback for Washington. But Seoul and Tokyo coming together is a **major diplomatic win** for the US and a big loss for China. The US has made other gains on **China's periphery**. It has managed to win the confidence of the new Philippines president Bongbong Marcos. The Philippines is an **old treaty ally** of the US that was drifting towards China under Marcos's immediate predecessor.

Agreement between Germany and Japan to coordinate their policies on Russia and reduce their excessive **dependence on China-centred supply chains** is also a major development.

What are the reasons for realignment of international relations?

The realignment underway is part of the **emerging post-post-Cold War world**. The rules governing the world that emerged at the end of the Cold War during 1989-91 have been under stress for a while now.

The **Russian aggression against Ukraine and the deepening conflict over Taiwan** have accelerated the breakdown. The conflict envelops the **economic and technological domains** as well.

The **sharpening contradictions** between **Russia-China axis and the West** have given regional powers some room for bargaining with both sides.

What are different perspectives to look at realignment of the relationships among middle powers? Some trends of rearrangement of great power and regional politics are **sustainable**, and others are **short-term adjustments**.

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In the Middle East, the **Saudi-Iran rapprochement** could be seen as **either tactical or strategic**. There exist **deep contradictions** between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Saudis will find it hard to break up their hundred-year-old partnership with the western powers.

But the effort to limit the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia is not an exception in the Middle East. The conflict between UAE and Saudi Arabia on the one hand and Qatar on the other was resolved in 2021. **Turkey** is now trying to end the political **rift with Saudi Arabia and Egypt**.

Turkey and Iran face **deepening domestic crises** and scaling down their **foreign policy adventurism** of recent decades. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are not so sure about Biden's policies. The changes that are happening may not **be sustained in the longer term**. In the case of South Korea, it is not clear if the current bold policies of the President will be sustained by the next president. South Korea's deep **economic relationship** with China cannot be overturned in the immediate future.

What are different ways of looking at the long-term concern for Delhi towards Putin's growing dependence on Xi?

One view is that a **weakened Russia** will inevitably become a **junior partner to China**. It will make Moscow a **less reliable partner** for Delhi in **balancing Beijing**.

A second position argues that Russia-India relations are essentially **immune to change**. Russia will always be an **independent great power**. Moscow can keep the ties with Beijing and Delhi on separate tracks despite the growing **Sino-Indian contradictions**.

A third view is less hopeful about the future of the Sino-Russian partnership. There is a need to prepare for the worst possible outcomes for India in relation to China. India will need **stronger strategic ties** with the US, Europe and Japan.

11. Discrimination in the IITs is something to write about

Source– The post is based on the article “**Discrimination in the IITs is something to write about**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **22nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Social empowerment. GS2- Polity

Relevance– Issues related to social justice

News– Recently an undergraduate student of chemical engineering at the IIT Bombay, committed suicide.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is not necessarily hurling abuse at somebody. It is a **layered and continuous process** that happens every day. It steadily creates an **atmosphere of “us” and “them”**.

Why discussion on discrimination at the IITs needs to be a discussion on merit?

The political philosopher, Michael Sandel, provides **criticism of meritocracy**. He calls it a **societal ideal**. He argues that **arrogance among the elites** of their capabilities and **politics of humiliation** are natural outcomes of **meritocracy**.

Some sections of the IITs are also suffering from **meritocratic arrogance**. This happens, when elite class tend to “look down on those who do not rise”.

Such an approach undermines **social recognition and esteem** for those who lack the credentials that are rewarded by the system to the upper class.

How is the principle of equal opportunity not sufficient for social well-being?

It is only a corrective measure of **historical injustice**. It is not a **sufficient principle** to foster an **equitable society**.

Social well-being depends upon **cohesion and solidarity**. **Individual happiness** does not only require the freedom to rise to new positions of comfort and distinction. It also requires that they should be able to lead a **life of dignity and culture**.

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What is the way forward to end discrimination at IITs?

IITs should reflect on the **blind spots of biases**. Faculty at the IITs need to **re-imagine classrooms** as spaces **free of meritocratic or discriminatory judgements**.

Building empathy and fostering a culture of equality, dignity, and fraternity cannot happen through **short orientation programmes**. These should be built into the curriculum at the IITs. It should become the **DNA of campus life**.

12. On Bhopal Gas tragedy curative petition: Where did the constitutional sympathy for the victims vanish?

Source– The post is based on the article “**Upendra Baxi on SC ruling on Bhopal Gas tragedy curative petition: Where did the constitutional sympathy for the victims vanish?**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **22nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Functioning of judiciary

Relevance– Judicial decisions on important matters

News – Recently, the Constitution bench of SC disposed of the curative petition related to Bhopal gas tragedy case.

What are the issues with the court order on curative petition?

Language used by the SC– The Court considered it an “**incident**”. As per SC, the case is declared as justly settled by the Court in the past because it amounts to six times more than the compensation for motor accidents.

This is nothing when **Intergenerational impacts on victims** are taken into account. The original Indian suit was for three billion dollars. But a judicial settlement of \$470 million is **described consistently as just**.

The Court’s **frequent references to private parties** demote them. This is rarely used in **constitutional discourse** for petitioners who seek relief from injustice or tyranny.

Legal reasoning- The Court has justified the 1989 Bhopal judicial settlement order because of **certain imperatives**. It invoked the enormous **suffering of the victims**. The court said that, without a settlement, immediate funds would not have been available for the victims.

It also invoked the **inadequate assets of Union Carbide India Limited in India**. It said that mere sympathy for the sufferers does not enable us to devise a panacea.

The Court stated that **providing closure to the case** was also an **important aspect**. It is more important in the context of Indian judiciary where delay is almost inevitable.

The argument of being ever too late to plead a fraud is contrary to **legislative and administrative principles**. The Court says the sovereign state of India is unable to “furnish any rationale for **raking up this issue** more than two decades after the incident”.

But one needs to distinguish between mere “**raking up**” an issue and a **genuine policy shift**.

The Bhopal catastrophe was a “**rarest of rare**” case deserving **curative judicial sympathy**.

The Court further said that reopening the settlement will open a “**Pandora’s box**” to the **detriment of the beneficiaries**. Courts can reopen the settlement amount on the grounds that a fraud has been practised in reaching it.

The counsel for Union Carbide maintained that the Union of India will have to pay back the **entire amount of compensation with interest** and begin the suit all over again. But the court did not ask the Union government to pursue it. **Bhopal Act** has provisions for providing funds for the care and justice of Bhopal tragedy victims.

Neglecting the constitutional principles– The principle of **constitutional sympathy** was not invoked. Rather, the “**settled principles of law**” was preferred. **Justice and fairness** cannot be achieved in the curative petition by mere reiteration of “**settled principles of law**”.

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The idea of **invocation of power to do complete justice** was not used by the court. The Court stated that **Article 142** would not be an appropriate course of action or a method to impose a greater liability on UCC.

The Supreme Court should not have abandoned **all obligations of care and justice** owed to the victims of Bhopal. Our Constitution insists **not just on closure, but on just closure**.

13. On the India and Japan relationship and challenges from geopolitical issues

Source: This post is created based on the articles

“On the India and Japan relationship and challenges from geopolitical issues” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd March 2023**.

“A comprehensive partnership” published in **Business Standard** on **22nd March 2023**.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Bilateral and Regional agreements involving India.

News: Recent visit of Japanese Prime Minister to India holds much more significance than it appears.

Since 2006, the Prime Ministers of India and Japan have exchanged visits for their “annual summit” since 2006. These summits have been focussed on India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

However, this year’s visit of Japan’s PM is focussed on 2 main objectives:

First, coordinating the G-7 and G-20 agendas on food and energy security issues arising mainly due to Ukraine conflict. Unveiling Japan’s \$75 billion plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)

Second, to work with countries in the region on avoiding debt traps, building infrastructure, and enhancing maritime and air security.

What are Japan’s Objectives behind recent visit to India?

Japan is looking bring India on board with the G-7’s plans to address the Ukraine issue and call out “Russian aggression”.

Japan’s FOIP plan against China includes India as an important member.

This visit is also a show of strength against the recent Chinese President Xi Jinping’s Moscow visit.

What is the significance of India and Japan relations?

First, India and Japan share a close bilateral and multilateral cooperation (the Quad).

Second, India and Japan collaborate on many projects. Japanese corporations and investors have been a major source of infrastructure finance. For example, Japanese loan for the much-delayed “Bullet train” project, plan develop infrastructure to link Bangladesh and India’s northeast.

Third, India is also a major economic and geo-economic partner for Japan.

Fourth, as the presidents of G-7 and G-20, cooperations between both can ensure that the outcomes come in the favour if global south. There are pending issues like climate finance and transition finance, as well as reforming multilateral development banks like the World Bank. India has been invited as an observer to the G7 summit in Tokyo later this year.

Fifth, both countries have common goals to end the Ukraine war and pushback against China’s aggression.

Sixth, strategic component of the relations has expanded vastly. Present Japanese PM has also continued on the same approach.

What are the differences between India and Japan’s approaches?

First, Japan is part of the U.S.’s alliance, Unlike India.

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Second, Japan has been in favour of sanctions against Russia, while India has been neutral on this issue.

Third, While India has been vocal about its concerns over China's actions at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), it has been hesitant in directly criticising China's actions in the South China Sea, Taiwan Straits, etc.

Fourth, India's refusal to join [Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership](#), and hesitancy towards the trade vertical of the [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#).

14. R&D: India's missing giants

Source- The post is based on the article "R&D: India's missing giants" published in the "Business Standard" on 23rd March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions for development

Relevance- Innovation for growth of economy

News- The article explains the lack of R&D expenditure in India. It explains the need for global brands in India and creating a world-competitive industry to build these brands.

What are issues with R&D expenditure in India?

India lags the world in R&D. It is the **fifth largest economy**, but **ranks 16th in investment on R&D**.

Large firms worldwide dominate investment in technology. The **top 20 investors in industrial R&D** account for **over 20% of the total industrial R&D** done by millions of firms worldwide. But, the 26th largest investor in industrial R&D worldwide invests more in R&D than all of Indian industry combined.

Top five firms in the non-financial sector have low R&D investment in India. While the top five firms in the US spend 152 billion dollars on R&D, in China 31 billion dollars, but in India they spend only 0.9 billion dollars.

R&D investment as a percent of profit is much more interesting. It is 37% in the US, 29% in China, 43% in Japan, and 55% in Germany. In India, it is 2%.

What are the benefits of developing global brands by India firms?

It is argued that large groups in India have failed in building a **single global brand**. It is blamed on a **mentality of outsourcing**. The international firms like Apple, Microsoft, Sony, BMW are globally associated with great products in particular industries.

The brands they have built provide **global reach and a premium positioning** that delivers great profitability.

How the firms in East Asian economies became global brands?

Firms like Samsung, Hyundai, LG, TSMC and Acer did not start as global brands. They began with **outsourcing, as original equipment manufacturers or OEMs**. They build **manufacturing operations of global scale**.

They used their demanding buyers as a **source of technology** that made them **world-competitive**. They **invested in R&D, as process innovation**, to make **manufacturing more efficient**. They then offered their buyers products with **new and improved designs**.

With **world-competitive manufacturing and product design** in place, they made the shift to their **own brand manufacturing**. They launched their own brands.

This is the story of Samsung in microwaves and semiconductors, LG in TV sets, Hyundai in cars and excavators, TSMC in microprocessors, and Acer in laptops.

As firms like Hyundai, Samsung moved up the OEM to OBM chain, their **investment in R&D** multiplied. **Samsung** has consistently ranked among the **world's five largest investors in R&D**. It invests \$18 billion a year, more than all of India

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What is the way forward to build global brands in India?

It requires a **long-term entrepreneurial outlook** with **investment in technology**. There is a need for building a **world-competitive industry**.

Outsourcing should not be discouraged. The current protection through PLI subsidies must continue. At the same time, there is a need to **invest strongly in design**.

A few **giant investors in R&D** must emerge in India. The most profitable firms in software, in consumer goods and industrial products are suitable for it. If they are not willing, new entrants to build **world-leading firms based on investments in technology** must be prompted.

15. [The happiest countries also rank among the highest in antidepressant consumption](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “The happiest countries also rank among the highest in antidepressant consumption” published in “The Indian Express” on 23rd March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues related to development and management of human resources.

Relevance- Important reports and indices

News- World Happiness Report 2023 published by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions released recently.

What are some facts about the World Happiness Report 2023?

Denmark is at number two and Iceland in the third spot. Sweden and Norway, are at six and seven, respectively.

The ranking uses six key factors to measure happiness — **social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption**.

What are issues related to the happiness report?

As per the data released by the OECD, the **use of antidepressants** increased nearly two and half times across Europe between 2000 and 2020. Iceland is at the top spot, followed immediately by Sweden and Norway. Finland and Denmark come in at number eight and nine.

The measures used to map happiness often don't **account for things such as loneliness** in highly developed societies. **Material well-being** does not preclude conditions like **clinical depression**.

These reports rank each nation for the efforts taken by their government for happiness among its citizens. Happiness itself is too **ineffable, individual and elusive**. It cannot be properly assessed by rankings and measurements.

16. [The road to ending tuberculosis](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “The road to ending tuberculosis” published in “The Hindu” on 23rd March 2023.

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

Relevance- Communicable diseases, their treatment and management

News- The article deals with important areas of action to end TB by 2030. It also explains the global response to stop TB incidence.

What are global efforts taken to reduce the incidence of TB?

In 1993, the World Health Organization declared TB a **global health emergency**.

The **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria** began disbursing money directed toward the **global TB epidemic** in 2003. But **conditions are imposed** on it by its donor constituents. There are **conflicts among stakeholders** regarding the **amount of money allocated** for three diseases. The **Stop TB Partnership** mobilises a disparate set of actors towards the goal of ending TB.

How has the global TB response been adapting to changes?

There is **engagement of people** affected by the disease.

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There is use of **molecular diagnostic tools** developed for diagnosing TB.

Social safety programmes to address the **poverty drivers of the TB epidemic** have been introduced.

Mobile and computational data revolution is being leveraged to improve treatment outcomes

What are the three areas that are important to achieve the goal of ending TB by 2030?

The First area is *vaccine development*.

There is a need for the **development and wide use of an adult TB vaccine**. The current vaccine delivered at birth is 100 years old.

The experience with the COVID-19 vaccine development process can be used. The issue of **equitable distribution** seen with the COVID-19 vaccines should be avoided.

The second area is that of **getting newer therapeutic agents for TB**.

After a development drought of nearly five decades, a few **new anti-TB drugs** are today available for widespread use.

Moving to an **injection free and shorter all oral pills regimen for TB** will improve compliance and reduce patient fatigue.

The effort to come up with newer drugs needs to accelerate so that **drug resistance** to the most recently introduced drugs can be tackled.

The third area of action is **diagnostics**.

Use of **AI-assisted handheld radiology with 90- second reporting and 95% plus accuracy** for diagnosing TB is important development. It should be **rolled out universally** immediately.

Sentinel, passive surveillance and interpretation of cough sounds for TB is another breakthrough area. This allows for **home-level screening and monitoring**. It should be used widely.

Confirmatory diagnosis using **nucleic acid amplification** can be explored. InDx diagnostics coalition and other biotech startups should be incentivised to break the **complexity of molecular testing and price barriers** with **affordable high- quality innovations**.

[17. Why Univ Rankings Are In Trouble From India To US](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Why Univ Rankings Are in Trouble from India To US**”, published in **Times of India** on **23rd March 2023**.

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

News: Many foreign universities recently rejected the US News & World Report annual rankings. Many top universities were included among them, for example the top ranked Harvard Medical School, law schools of UC Berkeley and Yale.

Their justification was that these rankings were harmful to attracting prospective students.

Similarly, in 1995, Reed College refused to participate in the US News & World Report annual survey. The reason was a WSJ report of 1994 about institutions manipulating data to move up in the rankings in various popular college guides.

However, the executive chair of US News & World Report, said that the mentioned elite schools don't want to be held accountable by an independent third party.

Recently India's National Assessment and Accreditation Council's processes have come in for a lot of criticism and several articles have red-flagged its credibility.

What are the issues with the measurement of performance of Universities?

There are issues with both qualitative and quantitative measurements of universities. A qualitative approach is time-consuming and cannot be verified. Moreover, it is labor-intensive,

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and not statistically representative. Whereas the qualitative measurement relies on numbers and can be manipulated by institutes.

Another issue is whether a university should be programme accredited or institution accredited. programme accreditation can be enormously time-consuming for our large education system, whereas university accreditation can hide the inconsistencies within departments.

How do the ranking agencies operate presently?

There are many ranking agencies operating presently, for example, THE World University Rankings (THE-WUR), QS Asian University Rankings, Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings, etc.

THE-WUR measures the university performance based on 13 indicators, across teaching (30%), research (30%), research citation (30%) international outlook (7. 5%) and knowledge transfer/industry income (2. 5%).

QS measures based on academic reputation (40%), employer reputation (10%), faculty student ratio (20%), citation per faculty (20%) and international faculty and student ratio (5% each).

NAAC measure is based on 15% for curricular aspects, 20% for teaching learning and evaluation, 25% for research, innovation and extension and 10% each for 4 other aspects.

NIRF ranking is based on six parameters such as research and professional practice, graduation outcomes, outreach and inclusivity.

Why is there so much difference in methods of ranking universities?

Education is multi-faceted. There is a large diversity in the Indian education system.

Different type of institutions like pvt or public, tech or social science, language based etc, operate under very different conditions. They cannot be grouped under the same parameters for a quality check.

Therefore, ranking and accreditation processes must be scrapped and quality assurance must be adopted as the default. Individual Universities must be held accountable for the performance.

18. Abolition is the way: On the higher judiciary's move on the death penalty

Source: The post is based on the article “**Abolition is the way: On the higher judiciary's move on the death penalty**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About death sentences.

News: The Supreme Court has asked the Centre to provide data which may point to less painful, more dignified and socially acceptable methods to carry out death sentences other than death by hanging.

What was the case about and What is the Centre's stand on death by hanging?

Read here: [SC Bench seeks data on alternatives to hanging](#)

What are the observations of the SC on death sentences?

Bachan Singh vs State of Punjab (1980) case: The court upheld the death penalty, but limited it to the ‘rarest of rare cases’,

Deena Dayal vs Union of India And Others (1983) case: The court upheld the executing method by ruling that hanging is “as painless as possible” and “causes no greater pain than any other known method”.

Evolved clemency jurisprudence: This makes decisions on mercy petitions justiciable and penalises undue delay in disposing of mercy pleas by commuting death sentences to life.

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What are the recommendations of the Law Commission on death sentences?

The 35th Report of the Law Commission (1967) noted electrocution, use of a gas chamber and lethal injection can be considered as less painful. However, the commission was not in a position to come to a conclusion. So, it refrained from recommending any change.

What should be done on the question of death sentences?

Humanise the approach further: Instead of debating the manner of execution, a wider debate on abolishing the death penalty should be carried out. This is because any form of execution is a fall from humaneness, offends human dignity and perpetrates cruelty.

If eliminating cruelty and indignity is the aim, abolition of death sentences is the answer.

19. As Covid and H3N2 flu cases rise, here's how India can help build global resilience

Source: The post is based on the article “As Covid and H3N2 flu cases rise, here's how India can help build global resilience” published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About pandemic treaty.

News: The recent rise in Covid-19 cases and ongoing influenza outbreaks have highlighted the need for a pandemic treaty.

About health risks at present

About the current landscape of Covid-19: XBB.1.5 has been reported from 38 countries and declared a variant of interest (VOI) by the WHO.

The Covid XBB 1.16 variant is fuelling the surge. India witnessed nearly a three-fold rise in cases over the last fortnight. So far, it has not caused any mortality in India. XXBB 1.16 is nearly one-and-a-half times of XBB.1.5. Thus making it an aggressive variant with immune escape properties.

The surge of H3N2 Influenza A cases:

Read here: [H3N2: What is this virus and how can it be prevented from spreading](#)

What is the need for the pandemic treaty?

Limitations of the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005: Limitations like countries not reporting cases in time and international agencies not responding adequately was exposed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Emergence and re-emergence of diseases: Emergence and re-emergence of diseases of animal origin highlighted the need for local, national and global governance to combat diseases.

Read more: [Need for a Global Pandemic Treaty – Explained, pointwise](#)

About the debate for a pandemic treaty

World Health Assembly set off a global process in 2021. An intergovernmental negotiating body (INB) that includes WHO's 194 countries is steering this process.

At the same time, more than 300 amendments to the IHR is also being discussed. The World Health Assembly in 2024 is expected to ratify these and set a “comprehensive, complementary and synergistic set of global health agreements”.

What is the pandemic treaty?

Read here: [WHO publishes zero-draft of pandemic treaty: Equity, IPR take centre stage](#)

How India can help in developing global health resilience?

Being the president of the G20 group of countries India has a significant role in developing global health resilience. India is working on One Health Mission. The G20 is already engaged with One Health (OH) issues.

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What should be done to ensure an equitable pandemic treaty?

Appropriate use, recognition, and protection of indigenous knowledge: This will traditionally recognise the interconnectedness of human, non-human and ecosystem health.

Work on the inclusion of women and minority groups: The world should stress on substantive and equitable inclusion of women and minority groups, including racial, ethnic and sexual minorities. This is because of the traditionally under-represented groups in treaty design and implementation.

Use of health equity impact and gender-based analysis: This is to identify and develop mitigation plans for the potentially inequitable impact of epidemics.

What India should do to ensure health resilience?

Promote the establishment of OH infrastructure: This will need an integrated OH surveillance system, building and nurturing partnerships to connect and share data on infectious pathogens and related risk factors.

Work on pandemic preparedness: This includes integrating monitoring and assessment into the state and district governance architecture. As this will ensure an inter-/ transdisciplinary OH evaluation framework and methodology, including metrics for measuring success.

20. AI's best use case may actually be in our judicial system

Source: The post is based on the article “AI's best use case may actually be in our judicial system” published in **LiveMint** on **24th March 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Functioning of Judiciary, GS 3 – Science and Technology**

Relevance: **Role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in judiciary**

News: The article discusses how AI can be adopted in our judicial system for improving its efficiency.

What are the key findings of the data?

There are **around 47 million pending cases in the courts** and more cases are added every year. According to the **World Bank's Doing Business Report 2020**, India ranks 136th out of 190 countries in the enforcement of contracts, which is lower than China (46th).

Further, the **average time taken to enforce a contract in India is nearly four years** which is more than four times the global average of 358 days.

What are the causes for the poor performance of contract enforcement and pending cases?

Friction in economic transactions: Lack of trust between the parties of the contract often leads to **breach of the contract**. This either leads to additional costs or reduces the volume of the contract transaction.

It also increases the burden on the judiciary for resolving disputes. Thus, the lack of proper enforcement of contracts leads to a market breakdown.

Vicious cycle limiting state capacity: The judiciary in India is often involved in checks and balances, **i.e., holding executives responsible for the acts and policies**.

The time spent in this by the judiciary reduces their time and attention to the actual delivery of services. This also reduces the overall capacity of the different branches of the government.

How can AI help in solving these problems?

Analyse and categorize cases: There are many types of disputes pending in the court. **AI can analyze both, rulings and filings, to identify the majority number of pending cases.**

It can also **be used to conduct in-depth root-cause analyses for these cases**, which may then be used to bring procedural and substantive reforms.

For example, if it is found that most of the disputes pending in the court are over land, then the dispute resolution mechanism could be changed to focus more on settling these problems.

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Provide a feedback loop: AI can help in providing real time feedback of the caseload on courts due to the appeals made on the laws made by the legislatures. This feedback would help in improving the design of the laws formulated by the legislatures.

Must Read: [How Artificial Intelligence can help in handling the pendency in courts in India?](#)

What can be done going ahead?

China has already implemented a similar system **known as Xiao Zhi 3.0 (Little Wisdom)**. The AI has helped to cut a judge's average workload by over a third and saved Chinese citizens 1.7 billion working hours from 2019 to 2021.

Moreover, **an estimate suggests that even a 10% improvement in judicial efficiency could help unlock at least ₹4,000 crore for India's GDP.**

Therefore, it becomes necessary to incorporate AI in our judicial system for better efficiency and for overall growth of the economy.

21. ['Press must remain free if a country is to remain a democracy': CJI Chandrachud at RNG awards](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "Press must remain free if a country is to remain a democracy: CJI Chandrachud at RNG awards" published in the "The Indian Express" on 24th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance- Issues related to media

News- CJI DY Chandrachud gave a speech as the chief guest at the RNG awards.

What is the importance of media?

Promoting debate and discussion- **Debates and discussion** are the first steps towards action. All societies inevitably become **dormant, and immune to the problems** faced by them. Journalism pushes them out of this **collective inertia**.

The media has always played an important role in shaping the **course of current events**, and the **course of history** itself. For example, the #MeToo movement had cascading effects all over the world and it was a watershed moment in history.

Importance for democracy- The media is the fourth pillar of the State, and an integral component of democracy.

A **functional and healthy democracy** must encourage the development of journalism as an institution that can ask difficult questions to the establishment.

Voice of common man- **Local or community-based journalism** has played an important role in encouraging **social cohesion and political activism**. It has the ability to **raise the little-known concerns** and set the agenda for debate on those issues at the policy level.

Community journalism opens the avenues for the members of marginalised communities to raise their own issues.

Relevance in emergency situations- The relevance of the media was best highlighted during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Electronic, print, and social media facilitated the State to **disseminate the relevant information to the general public** during the lockdown.

The media highlighted **administrative loopholes and excesses**. Various high courts and the Supreme Court of India relied on news reports in taking **suo motu cognisance** of instances of violations of people's rights during the pandemic.

How did the media play an important role in pre-independence India?

India has a great legacy of newspapers. They have acted as **catalysts of social and political change**.

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Prior to independence, newspapers were run by **social reformers and political activists**. The objective was to raise awareness and outreach to people .

For instance, Dr. Ambedkar launched several newspapers such as *Mooknayak*, *Bahishkrut Bharat*, *Janata*, and *Prabuddha Bharat* to **create awareness about the rights of the most neglected communities** in India.

The newspapers and other publications of pre-Independence India also give us a **picture of the detailed history** of those times.

How is the media landscape changing?

Recently, **social media** has become a **game changer** for journalists by providing opportunities to individuals to launch their own online media channels. In that way, online platforms have led to the **democratisation of the media**.

Earlier, the **paucity of space** was a constraining factor. Now, it is the **paucity of reader patience**. Readers have short attention spans. News is reduced to shorts on YouTube or reels on Instagram.

In recent years, we are also witnessing a rising interest in legal journalism. Legal journalism is the storyteller of the justice system, shedding light on the complexities of the law. It is thus essential for journalists to provide a complete picture of events, rather than presenting a one-sided view. Journalists have a duty to report accurately and impartially.

What are the challenges faced by the media?

Fake news poses a serious threat to the **independence and impartiality of the press** in the current society. It has the **capability to create tensions** between communities by misleading people.

Another issue affecting the media is that of **legitimacy**. A **diverse and representative newsroom** is essential for media institutions to provide **well-researched and complex stories**. **Selective quoting of speeches and judgments** of judges by journalists in India has become a matter of concern. This practice has a tendency to **distort the public's understanding** of important legal issues. Judges' decisions are often **complex and nuanced**.

What is the way forward to ensure a robust media?

It is the **collective responsibility of journalists as well as other stakeholders** to weed out any element of prejudice from the process of reporting events.

Journalists should provide a neutral view, in case of reporting on legal matters.

A **comprehensive fact-checking mechanism** should be in place to verify all news items before reporting.

As citizens, we may not agree with the approach of a journalist. But **disagreement must not distort into hatred** and hatred must not be permitted to evolve into violence. The Supreme Court of India has emphasised on the **rights of journalists** in a number of judgments.

Media institutions need to ensure that their **newsroom culture** reflects the **diverse news content** they are producing.

[22. Express View on President's Xi's Moscow visit: China-Russia tango is a challenge for India](#)

Source: The post is based on the articles "**Xi Jinping's Russia visit: Russian ballet with Chinese characteristics diminishes India's strategic space**" and "**Express View on President's Xi's Moscow visit: China-Russia tango is a challenge for India**" published in the **Indian Express** on **24th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Russia-China joint statement.

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News: Recently, the Chinese President visited Russia and supported the Russian President in his upcoming election. Russia called the Chinese peace proposals between Russia and Ukraine as “constructive”.

Note: China lists “12 principles” for peace. This includes respect for “sovereignty of all countries”, “abandoning Cold War mentality”, resuming peace talks and stopping unilateral sanction,

What are the key highlights of the Russia-China joint statement?

The joint statement **a)** Neglected western sanctions and emphasised on strengthening trade and economic cooperation, especially energy cooperation, **b)** reaffirmed their commitment to the 2021 Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation, **c)** Decided to move ahead on China-Mongolia-Russia natural gas pipeline project and **d)** highlighted the areas of cooperation include civil aviation manufacturing, the automobile industry, etc, and **e)** condemned the Quad grouping, which India is a part.

Note: Russia is now China’s biggest supplier of oil. Ever since the sanctions, Russia’s access to critical technology is entirely dependent on China.

Read more: [In light of China-Russia alliance and Ukraine conflict, India and the new Eurasia](#)

What are the global strategic implications of the Russia-China joint statement?

Implications for western countries: **a)** China will not let Russia fail in Ukraine. This may well affect the future trajectory of the conflict in Ukraine, **b)** US and Europe will need all the support to counter the Russia-China partnership.

Implications for India: **a)** Diminishes the “strategic autonomy” available with Russia, **b)** complicates the security environment with Russia, **c)** Reduces the reliability of Russia as Russia’s dependence on China is increasing rapidly, **d)** Might force India to align more towards the West, and **e)** The success of India’s presidency of the G20 will be measured on the outcome document, which needs the co-operation of both Russia and China. Thus, the recent developments of Russia-China might hamper the outcome document.

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

23. A chilling remark and the ‘price to pay’

Source– The post is based on the article “**A chilling remark and the ‘price to pay’**” published in **The Hindu** on **25th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2-Polity

Relevance: Importance of freedom in democracy

News- The Union Law Minister to label retired judges who question “state policies” as being “anti-India” elements. It is a flawed understanding of concepts and a matter of grave concern for citizens.

What are the rights of retired judges with respect to free speech?

Judges who demit office **are also citizens** of this country. They have a **right to free speech and expression**. They have a duty to speak up when they find the legislature, the executive or even the judiciary to be transgressing their limits.

The act of questioning the state is not a case of being “anti-national”.It is a case of **being a “concerned patriot”**. The response of the state has to be to either justify the measures it has adopted, or take the advice offered and course correct.

The remarks **impact the rest of the citizenry**. They will generate less ideas. There will be **fewer discussions** on issues of seminal importance as there could be a tendency from now on to play it safe.

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Actions of the state will be unchecked because mere acts of questioning the state will endanger the individual.

What is the importance of freedom?

The **final end of the state** is to make men **free to develop** them. The **deliberative forces** should prevail over the **arbitrary**.

Liberty is both **an end and means**. Liberty **ensures happiness**.

Freedom to think is necessary to **discover and spread political truth**. Without free speech, assembly discussion would be futile.

The greatest threat to freedom is an **inert people** and **public discussion** is a **political duty**.

24. Tension in Indo-Pacific and Russia-Ukraine conflict are symptoms of an emerging global disorder

Source– The post is based on the article “**Tension in Indo-Pacific and Russia-Ukraine conflict are symptoms of an emerging global disorder**” published in **Indian Express** on **25th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International Relations

Relevance: Changing global order and concept of Indo-Pacific

News- Japan PM has visited India and unveiled its Indo-Pacific strategy.

What are the key points of the Indo-Pacific strategy of India?

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled his strategy for the Indo-Pacific annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in 2018.

He spoke about freedom of navigation and open sealines. His emphasis was on inclusivity and ASEAN centrality.

What are some key points about Japan’s Indo-Pacific strategy?

Japanese Prime Minister [Shinzo Abe](#) coined the **phrase Indo-Pacific**, first in his 2006 address to the Indian Parliament. He said that the two oceans are bringing about a **dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and prosperity**.

Later in 2012, he emphasised “**peace, stability, and freedom of navigation**”.

Abe initially looked at the Indo-Pacific from the prism of **regional peace and prosperity**. But, developments in the South China Sea led to the concept acquiring a **greater security dimension** in the last few years.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida chose India to unveil **Japan’s Indo-Pacific strategy**. The focus of the strategy would be to promote a “**free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)**”. The initiative is aimed at curbing **China’s growing regional assertiveness**.

Kishida insisted that FOIP’s contemporary relevance goes beyond **regional security concerns**. It will be the defining feature of the **new global order**.

He emphasised that the world is at a **major inflection point** today. The Indo-Pacific conflict cannot be viewed apart from the **ongoing conflict in the Eurasian region**. Both are symptoms of an **emerging global order**.

In this new order, **traditional superpowers** are diminishing in influence. **Newly emerged powers** are not behaving as per norms. It appears as though a **new Cold War** has begun.

What is post -War world order?

The post-war world order was primarily about **sovereign inter-state relations and a relatively open global economy**. It is characterised by practices of **inclusive, rule-bound multilateralism**. It formed the **core of multilateral institutions** like the UN.

Western powers have added **concepts like democracy, liberalism and human rights** to this discourse.

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How is China challenging the postwar world order?

Its entry into the **WTO in 2001** was premised on the commitment that it would adhere to the core principles of this world order. However, as it grew in strength, especially after Xi Jinping's rule, it started to **challenge that order**.

China intends to **undermine the existing liberal global order** and replace it with a more **hegemonic and less liberal order** dominated by itself.

It has **disregarded sovereign national boundaries** in the name of historical claims and disputed the mandates of international agencies.

What is the role of India in this regard?

India is committed to **rejecting the authoritarian and coercive world order** that China wants to promote. India's commitment to freedom, human rights and peace also are above board.

It contributed significantly to **upholding multilateralism** through the UN and allied institutions. For upholding **India's principle of strategic autonomy**, it is important to ensure that the **Global South** has a significant role in shaping the 21st-century world order.

General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. [Our new trade policy must calm fears of rising import restrictions](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Our new trade policy must calm fears of rising import restrictions**” published in **Live Minton 20th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 –Economy

Relevance: Issues with categorizing import

News: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” – **George Santayana**. This quote holds significance in the upcoming foreign trade policy in which the Commerce Ministry has said that they are working to identify “inessential imports”.

What are inessential imports?

The concept of inessential imports was used in the 1970s when the Chief Controller of Imports and Exports used to decide **whether imports needed by businessmen should be allowed.**

Imports were denied if they were deemed “inessential”. They were also denied if they were accepted as essential, but were indigenously available.

These decisions were made based on the recommendations of Directorate of Technical Development (DGTD) officials, who lacked private sector expertise and inadequate technical understanding.

What are the concerns associated with categorizing imports as inessential imports?

Lowens Competition: This classification was one of the factors that protected Indian industry from competition and produced a high-cost economy that could not compete internationally and developed slowly.

Can Affect Foreign Trade Agreements (FTAs): This categorization might send wrong impressions to the countries signing FTAs with India.

The FTAs are designed to convince business partners that India aims to cut tariffs to promote trade. However, the FTA partners could be concerned if imports can **be limited by non-tariff measures.**

It is because of this that the **World Trade Organization prohibits quantitative import restrictions**, except in circumstances of a balance-of-payments crisis.

Can Have Impact On Foreign Invest in India: India is encouraging foreign firms to invest in India and make goods for international markets. This would enable India to take advantage of the China-plus-one plan and integrate with global value chains.

It will also support India’s “Make in India for the World” effort. However, such **arbitrary import restrictions won’t encourage foreign manufacturers to invest in India.**

Therefore, our foreign trade policy should unequivocally state that it will not **utilise quantitative import restrictions to restrict access to imports.**

Must Read: [Non-essential curbs – Policy focus must shift from imports to exports](#)

Why India shouldn’t be concerned about restricting imports?

Import restrictions are being urged **because of large trade deficit**. However, India also has a **large surplus on the ‘invisibles’ account due to the booming service exports and remittances.**

Further, **the combined deficit is expected to be about 2.5% of GDP** and so there is no case for imposing controls on imports.

Moreover, India should also not be concerned **about its Current Account Deficit because – a)** India has a good **amount of foreign exchange reserves** that can take care of sudden temporary pressures, **b)** the policy of a **floating exchange rate** gives the Reserve Bank of India the flexibility to allow the exchange rate to adjust in a way that will help contain imports and simultaneously stimulate exports and **c)** if our balance of payments is being impacted by an excess of aggregate

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demand over supply, then tightening fiscal and monetary policy would be the optimal approach that can be adopted.

2. [Safety in the storm – As the requirement for capital import into India at present is low, the global tornado has modest implications for us](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Safety in the storm – As the requirement for capital import into India at present is low, the global tornado has modest implications for us**” published in **Business Standard** on **20th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economy

Relevance: Reasons behind moderate investment and savings in India

News: [Volatility](#) in global financial markets has increased. However, the Indian economy has not been much affected by it because the requirement for capital import, i.e., **the gap between investment and savings is modest**.

What are the reasons behind modest investments and savings in India?

The aggregate domestic savings come down when there is a larger deficit. Therefore, **changes in the deficit are modest** due to which there is a moderate investment/savings gap in India.

Further, the weak pace of investment within India is **within reach of the supply of savings in the economy**. The requirement for foreign capital inflows is hence relatively small.

Moreover, even if the capital import need had been larger, the markets would still have supported it given the need for operating the accounting identity.

However, when the global financing environment is more stressed, **Indian asset prices have to drop to a point where buying them looks attractive**.

There are two ways in which this can happen – **a)** Either the exchange rate can act as a shock absorber and cheaper Indian assets are achieved through INR depreciation or **b)** the authorities hold up the exchange rate and local asset prices drop to a point where they are sufficiently attractive to global investors.

Moreover, **a combination of USD/INR adjustment and real estate price adjustment** can also help in making the price fall for Indian real estate globally.

What can be done to prevent the impact of falling real estate on the Indian economy?

There is a need to have **a large number of well-established Indian asset classes globally** along with a diversified engagement with global finance, well-established information flows and middlemen operating in public and private equity, etc.

This would make disruptions in any one asset class to not pose a threat to the whole Indian macroeconomy because this would be compensated by making small devolution in rupee while making other asset classes more appealing.

3. [A sweet export story: How India’s sugar shipments to the world are surging](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A sweet export story: How India’s sugar shipments to the world are surging**” published in the **Indian Express** on **20th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3: storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

Relevance: About India’s sugar shipments.

News: India’s sugar shipments in 2016-17 and 2017-18 sugar years (Oct-Sept) were a mere 0.46 lakh tonnes (lt) and 6.2 lt respectively. At present, they had increased to 110 lt by 2021-22.

About India's sugar shipments

INDIA'S SUGAR EXPORTS IN LAKH TONNES

Sugar Year	Raw Sugar	White Sugar***	Total
2016-17	0	0.46	0.46
2017-18	0.47	5.73	6.2
2018-19	13.13	24.87	38
2019-20	17.84	41.56	59.4
2020-21	28.16	43.74	71.9
2021-22	56.29	53.71	110
2022-23**	19.13	30.91	50.04

Note: Sugar Year is from Oct-Sept

As on March 15; *Includes refined sugar

Source: Indian Express

According to the International Sugar Organization, India has become the world's No. 2 in sugar shipments, next only to Brazil (255.40 lt) and way ahead of Thailand (79.86 lt) and Australia (25.67 lt). The biggest importers of Indian raw sugar were Indonesia (16.73 lt), Bangladesh (12.10 lt), Saudi Arabia (6.83 lt), Iraq (4.78 lt) and Malaysia (4.15 lt).

What are the various types of India's sugar shipments?

India exports both raw and white sugar. International Commission for Uniform Methods of Sugar Analysis is a measure of the purity of sugar based on colour. The lower the value, the more the whiteness.

Raw sugar: Raw sugar is what mills produce after the first crystallisation of juice obtained from the crushing of cane. This sugar is rough and brownish in colour. It has an ICUMSA value of 600-1,200 or higher.

Much of the world's sugar trade is in 'raws' and they can be transported in bulk vessels. This is because the raw sugar requires no bagging or containerisation and can be loaded in bulk. The buyer of raw sugar is the refiner, not the end-consumer.

Refined sugar: Raw sugar is processed in refineries for the removal of impurities and de-colourisation. The end product is refined white cane sugar having a standard ICUMSA value of 45. The sugar used by industries such as pharmaceuticals has ICUMSA of less than 20.

Whites sugars are usually packed in 50-kg polypropylene bags and shipped in container cargoes over shorter distances.

Note: Till 2017-18, India hardly exported any raw sugar. It mainly shipped plantation white sugar with 100-150 ICUMSA value. This was referred to as low-quality whites or LQW in international markets.

Read more: [Implications of Cheap Sugar in India – Explained, Pointwise](#)

What are the advantages of Indian raw sugar?

A joint committee visited Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, China and Bangladesh in 2018. Their mission is to promote exports of raw sugar from India. The committee found the following advantages of Indian raw sugar. These are,

The time window of Indian production: The refineries in Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, China and Bangladesh import raw sugar from Brazil. Brazilian mills operate from April to November, whereas India's crushing is from October to April. Hence, they are utilising Indian raw sugar during Brazil's off-season.

Freight cost savings: The voyage time from Kandla, Mundra or JNPT to Ciwandan Port of Indonesia is 13-15 days, compared to 43-45 days from Brazil's Port of Santos.

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Indian sugar is free of dextran: Dextran is a bacterial compound formed when sugarcane stays in the sun for too long after harvesting. Indian raw sugar has no dextran, as it is produced from fresh cane crushed within 12-24 hours of harvesting. On the other hand, the cut-to-crush time is 48 hours or more in Brazil.

India can supply raw sugar with high polarisation: Polarisation is the percentage of sucrose present in a raw sugar mass. The more the polarisation the easier and cheaper it is to refine. Indian mills could supply raw sugar with a very high polarisation of 98.5-99.5%. But it is only 96-98.5% in raw sugar from Brazil, Thailand and Australia.

How did Indian raw sugar advantages increase in India's sugar shipments?

Awareness created by the committee: The committee created awareness about the quality of Indian raw sugar. So much so that Indian raw sugar today fetches a 4% premium over the global benchmark price.

Measures by Indonesia: In 2019, Indonesia agreed to tweak its ICUMSA norms and reduced its import duty on Indian raw sugar from 15% to 5% to enable imports from India.

Lower stocks, production dipping and concerns about domestic availability and food inflation have led the government to cap India's exports in the current sugar year to 61 lt. Of that, 50 lt have already been dispatched. The government should understand that overseas markets lost aren't easy to regain.

4. [Build, But Take Care – Fast-paced highway expansion is being undermined by quality issues. This needs to be addressed](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Build, But Take Care – Fast-paced highway expansion is being undermined by quality issues. This needs to be addressed**” published in **The Times of India** on **20th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3: storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

Relevance: About India's fast-paced highway expansion.

News: The government's commitment to upgrading road infrastructure has resulted in the expansion of the National Highway (NH) stock from 91,287 km on March 31, 2014, to 1.45 lakh km at the end of February 2023.

The government spent in 2021-22 about Rs 2.2 lakh crore on roads, with the centre contributing over 90%. Though, the prioritisation and investment into roads are widely acknowledged, the NH programme has an unaddressed issue.

What is the challenge associated with India's fast-paced highway expansion?

The challenges include **a)** tolls are being levied when the NH work hadn't entirely been completed, **b)** the NH being inundated with rains suggesting the lack of drainage facilities entitled to NH projects, **c)** greenfield projects like the Bengaluru-Mysuru expressway faces few other challenges, **d) Underspending on maintenance of NH projects:** This is due to overwhelming emphasis is on expansion of NH projects. This will downgrade their quality and decrease India's economic competitiveness. For example, the government has said that annual budgetary outlay for maintenance and repairs is only about 40% of the estimated need as per its own norms, and **e)** Most of the expansion has come by reclassifying or upgrading state roads as NH. For example, from 2017-18 to January 31, 2023, about 28,517 km of state roads have been brought under the NH portfolio.

What should be done along with fast-pacing highway expansion?

The user charges from toll collections from NHs in 2021-22 amount to around Rs 35,000 crores. The amount should be prioritised for effective maintenance of NH stock.

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5. [Cereal solution – Dietary shifts are slow processes, and India must let all grains grow](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Cereal solution – Dietary shifts are slow processes, and India must let all grains grow**” published in **The Hindu** on **21st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Agriculture

Relevance: challenges with promoting millets

News: The PM recently inaugurated a [global conference on millets](#). The United Nations has declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets and the Budget 2023-24 has called millets as ‘Shree Anna’.

What are millets and their benefits?

[Click Here to Read](#)

Despite their benefits, they were not promoted during the green revolution.

Why were millets not promoted during the Green Revolution?

They were not promoted because of the **food security provided by high-yielding varieties of rice and wheat**.

High-yielding varieties of rice and wheat along with guaranteed procurement by the government enabled India to be food secure even in droughts and climate uncertainties.

However, **this food security came at the cost of exploitation of groundwater**, excessive use of pesticides and decreasing remunerations for the average farmer over the years.

As a result, the government is attempting to promote millet to support sustainable agriculture, however, there are challenges to overcome.

What are the challenges associated with promoting millets?

According to the **Food and Agriculture Organization**, **rice-wheat-maize constitutes 89% of global cereal production**. So, millet production needs to be much higher in order to compete with it.

Further, despite the existence of hybrid varieties of jowar and bajra, the yields have not risen. Hence, it is unrealistic to expect that growth will increase through simple technological advancements.

Moreover, dietary shifts are slow processes and promoting millets as superior to other grains **might have economic consequences** and may create hype about them similar to what was observed with cash crops. **This can have consequences for marginal farmers**.

Hence, it is preferable to **market all grains equally**, with an emphasis on expanding the customer base and giving them access to the cereals they want.

6. [Central banks step in as Credit Suisse collapses. India must monitor channels through which crisis can permeate into domestic economy](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“**Credit Suisse collapse: An RBI lesson for European central banks**” and “**Central banks step in as Credit Suisse collapses. India must monitor channels through which crisis can permeate into domestic economy**” published in the **Indian Express** on **21st March 2023**.

“**US bank failures – Europe may see similar troubles – are thanks to monetary/ fiscal imprudence. And India should brace for aftershocks. Two analyses**” published in **The Times of India** on **21st March 2023**.

“**Avoiding contagion – Credit Suisse collapse shows need to focus on stability**” published in the **Business Standard** on **21st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3: Effects of liberalization on the economy.

Relevance: About recent bank failures and their impact on India.

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News: Credit Suisse, a 167-year-old most influential bank in global history, especially in the areas of wealth management and investment banking, has collapsed recently. It was sold to Union Bank of Switzerland(UBS), which is Switzerland’s largest bank and a long-time rival.

About Credit Suisse collapse and recent bank crisis around the world

Credit Suisse’s fall comes only days after the collapse of three banks in the US. Further, the SVB Crisis has led Moody’s to downgrade New York-based Signature Bank to junk and place the ratings of six other US banks under review for a downgrade.

Any bank which has a smaller loan book and a larger portfolio of treasury bonds now faces similar risk. US banks are currently sitting on an estimated \$600 billion in potential losses owing to the erosion of their bond portfolios.

The US Fed is in dilemma, as the increasing interest rates will curtail inflation but hamper banks, on the other hand, reducing rates will worsen the inflation problem.

In response, central banks across the world have announced a coordinated response.

Note: As part of US Fed’s recent programme, banks can borrow from the Fed by placing their securities as collateral. The collateral will be valued at the face value of the security instead of the common practice of its market value. Also, the borrowing can be for maturity of one year instead of the usual three months. As the interest rates next year may be higher than now, the hit taken by the most vulnerable banks may be even greater next year.

Must read: [Silicon Valley Bank crisis: Reasons and Impacts - Explained, pointwise](#)

What will be the impact of US policy on India?

If the fed pursues an interest rate hike: Trigger a system-wide panic and push depositors away from smaller banks to bigger, more diversified banks thereby precipitating more bank-runs. The potential problems for India’s Economy include **a)** surge in demand for “safe” assets such as gold, **b)** currencies of emerging economies like the Indian rupee will come under pressure as foreign investors flee. (This will depreciate rupee).

If the fed reduced interest rates: **a)** the US economy could fall into a recession, hampering India’s growth prospects through the exports channel, **b)** Increase domestic inflation as India’s imports will be costly.

How India can act as a role model to prevent a bank crisis?

Read here: [SVB, Signature Bank collapse: What are ‘Too-Big-To-Fail’ banks, and what makes Indian banks safe](#) and [Why local banks are insulated from SVB ripples](#)

How do India’s and US policies differ?

Policy	US	India
Covid stimulus	Students studying in private universities in the US, who come mostly from rich families, received \$5,000 checks from the US government. These types of policies led to the deposits in US commercial banks increasing from \$13 trillion to \$18 trillion.	India’s Covid stimulus was carefully targeted at the poor and vulnerable sections of society. As per Economic Survey 2020-21, “India’s policies focused purely on necessities”.
Inflation Targetting	A sharp rise in inflation forced US Fed to pursue the most aggressive rate hike in four decades (about 5% in just six months).	The RBI and the government have worked in unison ever since the pandemic to control inflation.
Outcome	Created heavy losses for banks.	Insulated banks from losses.

What should be done to avert a bank crisis?

Read here: [Silicon Valley Bank crisis: Reasons and Impacts - Explained, pointwise](#)

7. [Schemes like OPS will only exacerbate the gap between richer and poorer states](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Schemes like OPS will only exacerbate the gap between richer and poorer states**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **21st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian economy

Relevance: Issues related to fiscal federalism

News: Recently, there are demands in some states to implement OPS. Some states like Himachal and Rajasthan have implemented it.

What are the differences between centre and states over fiscal autonomy?

States want to make their own decisions such as the type of pension scheme, the **freedom to decide welfare programmes** and so on.

But, states neither have the **financial resources** to implement their decisions nor the **freedom to mobilise finances** on their own. They are **dependent on the Centre** for resources.

This is responsible for the current standoff between the Union government and states over various issues such as “**freebies**” versus welfare, **reversion to the old pension scheme, and imposition of conditions for financial grants on states**.

Must read: [Comparison of National Pension Scheme with Old Pension System - Explained, pointwise](#)

What are fiscal issues related to the implementation of the Old Pension Scheme by some states?

The poor financial condition of states: States such as Rajasthan, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bengal want to implement the old pension scheme (OPS).

But large states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Gujarat are resisting pressure from their government employees to revert to OPS

Paradoxically, states that want to implement OPS have much **higher debt levels (40% of GDP)** than the states that are reluctant to switch to OPS (22%).

Punjab has a debt of **48% of GDP**. It spends nearly **one-fifth of its income** on just pensions for government employees.

When these states spend so much of their income on pensions, they will not have enough resources to cater to the **basic needs of the remaining population**. It forces them to **borrow more money**.

States that are implementing OPS do not have the **financial strength** for it. They are dependent on the Centre to provide funds either through devolution of taxes collected from other states or by borrowing and lending.

Read more: [State elections and the troubling return of the old pension scheme](#)

The financial gap between states: Just four large states; Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Gujarat are **net contributors to the Union government’s tax pool**. Most other states are **net takers**.

When the Punjab or Himachal government claims it has the right to decide on OPS, it is actually **paid for indirectly** by the future generations of people in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka through the Union government.

The purpose of such redistribution is to **close the gap** between these states over time. But, the **gap between the “net giving” and the “net taking” states** has only increased.

For example, the gap between the debt levels of states that have implemented OPS vis-à-vis the states that have resisted OPS has increased from **13% in 2003 to 20% of GDP in 2023**.

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This pattern of the richer states giving and the needier states taking more and more over time without closing the gap is **unsustainable and dangerous**. Profligate schemes like OPS will only exacerbate the gap between the richer and poorer states.

At some point, the richer states will start to question the **efficacy of such redistribution** and the need for them to continue to **fund regressive schemes** in poorer states.

Read more: [Why the Old Pension Scheme is both bad economics and bad politics](#)

8. [Understanding waste-to-energy plants](#)

[A grave mistake in Great Nicobar](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A grave mistake in Great Nicobar**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **22nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance– Environmental challenges related to development projects

News– Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has given clearance to a mega project at the cost of about ₹70,000 crore at the southern tip of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

What are some facts about the mega project at Andaman and Nicobar Island?

NITI Aayog is piloting the project and the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation** is the project proponent.

The project aims to develop an international transshipment port of 14.2 mTEU cargo capacity at Galathea Bay along the island’s south-eastern coast, an international airport to support 4,000 passengers during peak hours,

A 450 MVA gas and solar based power plant, and an ecotourism and residential township of about 160 sq km is also proposed.

What are issues related to this mega project?

Hasty clearance– The **environmental clearance process** seems very fast. The **MoEFCC’s Expert Appraisal Committee** initiated the process of environmental clearance in April 2021.

The Great Nicobar Island has a population of about 8,000. Once completed, the project is expected to attract more than 3 lakh people. It is equal to the current population of the entire island chain.

The **ecological and environmental cost** of this urbanisation project in a **marine and terrestrial biodiverse area** appears to not have been considered seriously.

Ecological challenges– The island, which is spread over 900 sq km, was declared a **biosphere reserve** in 1989 and included in the **UNESCO’s Man and Biosphere Programme** in 2013.

Afforestation is recommended as compensation for the loss of forest in the Great Nicobar Island is farcical. The EIA report says **compensatory afforestation** will be carried out in Haryana and Madhya Pradesh. **Far-field afforestation** makes no sense.

However, the project will end up **destroying vast stretches of coral reefs**. The report recommends ‘**translocation**’ of these organisms. Transplanted corals do not have a **high survival rate** and are **susceptible to bleaching**.

Impact on indigenous people– This project will impact the **rights of vulnerable tribal communities**, such as the Nicobarese and Shompen. They have been living in these areas for thousands of years and who depend on the forests for survival.

Tectonic instability– The Great Nicobar Island is located close to the **epicentre of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake**.

The coastline of the Great Nicobar Island sank several metres during the earthquake. The island topography is slowly regaining its original height.

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The **repeated up and down movement** makes the Great Nicobar Island **unsuitable to be developed** as an urban port city. But the EIA report hardly considers the **tectonic instability** around Great Nicobar.

9. [Credit Suisse collapse: The collapse of two mid-sized banks in the US does not portend a hard landing or a tipping point](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Credit Suisse collapse: The collapse of two mid-sized banks in the US does not portend a hard landing or a tipping point**” published in the **Indian Express** on **22nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3: Effects of liberalization on the economy.

Relevance: About recent bank failures and their impact on India.

News: The banking stress in Europe and the US has caused a hike in global interest rates and surged credit spreads. This caused fears that the global economy is tipping into a recession.

About SVB Crisis

Read here: [Silicon Valley Bank crisis: Reasons and Impacts - Explained, pointwise](#)

Why does the fall of banks not detected earlier?

Market’s focus was elsewhere: The market’s focus was on the quality of loans and not on the valuation of bond holdings.

US legislative changes in 2018: Due to these changes, smaller banks (those with less than \$250 billion in assets) were more loosely regulated and bigger banks were closely monitored.

Why Emerging Markets are not vulnerable?

Emerging Markets (EMs) have a history of frequent financial crises. So, banks in EM are supervised more closely with stricter regulations and regulators typically have ready facilities to provide liquidity to banks. These facilities as well as regulatory forbearance were vastly expanded during the pandemic.

What will be US Fed decisions and How it will impact India?

Read here: [Central banks step in as Credit Suisse collapses. India must monitor channels through which crisis can permeate into domestic economy](#)

How India can act as a role model to prevent a bank crisis?

Read here: [SVB, Signature Bank collapse: What are ‘Too-Big-To-Fail’ banks, and what makes Indian banks safe](#) and [Why local banks are insulated from SVB ripples](#)

What should be done to prevent a bank crisis?

Central banks will have to be more cautious. They will continue to tighten monetary policy and should provide enough liquidity to safeguard financial stability. This separation principle on which central banks operates is unlikely to change.

10. [Do not let increasing heatwaves sap worker productivity in India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Do not let increasing heatwaves sap worker productivity in India**” published in the **Live Mint** on **22nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS-3: Disaster Management.

Relevance: About heat waves impact on economy.

News: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said that February 2023 was the warmest February since 1901 with the average maximum temperature at nearly 29.54°C. The latest monthly report by the finance ministry mentions heatwaves as one of the extreme weather conditions that could feed food inflation this year. The recent [IPCC Synthesis Report](#) also mentioned increasing temperatures and their impacts.

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

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

How do heat waves impact economy?

a) Rising temperatures can hurt labour productivity. This includes outdoor sectors like agriculture, construction sites and street vendors and indoor sectors such as cloth weaving, garment sewing and steel infrastructural products. This is because workers will work less and absenteeism will increase.

b) Economists estimate that worker productivity declines by 2-4% with every degree Celsius increase in the temperature above normal levels, c) Denial of sleep at the night also hurts the ability to work the next day.

What should be done to mitigate heat waves impact on economy?

Change in forecast model: The forecasting model used by the Reserve Bank of India, the Quarterly Forecasting Model can be used in predicting heat waves also.

Innovative model: A collaborative effort by the government, private sector and voluntary organizations must invest in new building materials for homes as well as factories. Private investments in new roofing solutions to cool down homes in urban slums should be encouraged.

11. [Privatized Air India's takeoff can lead other PSUs to thrive as well](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Privatized Air India's takeoff can lead other PSUs to thrive as well” published in **Mint** on 23rd March 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economy – Mobilisation of Resources

Relevance: Privatization of the PSUs

News: Air India was completely privatized in January 2022. The airline has recently placed the biggest order of aircraft in India's aviation history. The article discusses how privatization can benefit and improve the functioning of PSUs.

About the Privatization of Air India

[Click Here to Read](#)

What are the benefits of privatizing Air India?

Air India after its privatization had ordered 470 [new aircraft](#). This would create around 70,000 direct jobs and thousands of indirect jobs.

It will also benefit air travellers to get newer routes, have cheaper fares and better overall service. Looking at the orders of Air India, other competitor airline might also order more than 1,000 aircraft soon. This will ultimately benefit the economy.

This shows that privatization has benefited the airlines in all aspects and hence, other PSUs should also be privatized on the same lines.

What steps can be taken by the government to privatize other PSUs?

Privatization has not been an easy or popular decision. Governments try to play safe due to public sentiment. Therefore, an alternative route can be taken.

The government should shift from **privatization towards corporatization**, i.e., there should be a shift from a 100% sale of government assets towards strategic disinvestments.

This corporatization can be done by **listing the shares of the PSUs in the stock market**.

This would provide a good price for shares, protect the government against short-term price swings as well as increase the time period of volatility in the equity market.

The shares of PSUs should be distributed to the general public, with **no individual or entity able to possess more than a 10% ownership**. This approach of corporatization may be more transparent and practical to execute.

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As soon as the government's share in a PSU falls below 50%, it becomes a private corporation with an independent board and professional management and free of the **4Cs**—CAG, CVC, CBI, and Courts.

The government can then continue to **sell the remaining of its ownership at a premium** until it has totally vacated the firm once it has been privatized.

For **employees of those PSUs, a stock option offers with a promise from the management of not being laid off can be made.**

This method of corporatization would benefit both the government as well as employees of the PSUs. Some of the examples of companies that were privatized in this way are British Airways, ICICI Bank, etc.

What can be the way ahead?

The government can start considering the corporatizing of those PSUs first in which it has low shares such as **Concor (54.8%), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (53%), Indian Oil Corp Ltd (51.5%), and BEML (54%).**

The government should consider corporatizing its PSUs since there is strong investor demand for Indian assets, both international and local, institutional and retail.

This would help the government to earn good revenues, which it can invest in infrastructure and the social sector.

12. The old pension scheme as a burden on the poor

Source- The post is based on the article "The old pension scheme as a burden on the poor" published in "The Hindu" on 23rd March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance- Issues related to public finances

News- The employees of some state governments are demanding the return to OPS. Some states like Rajasthan and Himachal have introduced OPS.

What are the challenges related to the introduction of OPS?

Economic status of government employees- The **Sixth Pay Commission** had substantially increased the basic salary of government employees to **cover pension contributions**. The **basic monthly salary** of a Class 4 employee as per seventh pay norm is ₹25,000.

The **World Inequality Report 2022** estimated the **average monthly income** of the bottom 50% of the population to be ₹4,468, whereas it is ₹14,669.7 for the middle 40%. The salary of a government employee is higher than the income of **more than 90% of the population**.

Thus, the OPS acts as a **regressive redistribution mechanism** that favours better off classes.

Rising pension liabilities- The pension liabilities of the government increased due to a substantial hike under the **Sixth pay matrix** to pay for OPS for existing employees. As a result, pension liabilities substantially increased to **9% of total States expenditure**. They are expected to increase in the future.

The pension liabilities of States account for **1.2% of GDP as on 2021--22**. From 2004 to 2019, the pension expenditure of States registered an **average annual growth of 16%**. **The aggregate receipts of State governments had an average growth of a mere 13.41%**.

Assuming this rate constant, the share of pension expenditure will account for **14.7% of total State expenditures by 2040, and 19.4% by 2050**.

Burden on the poor- Many State governments have yet to implement the **Seventh pay norms**, whereas some States have reportedly not paid arrears of the Sixth pay. Governments at the State level do not have **fiscal autonomy**.

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Currently, the **bottom 50% of the population** bears the burden of indirect taxation **six times more** than their income. Due to the OPS, the bottom of the pyramid population has to bear the burden of OPS expenditure. It will push them into destitution and abject poverty.

OPS will create **expenditure challenges for providing public goods**. It will deprive a large population of **basic necessities**.

What is the way forward for resolving the pension issues of government employees?

Opposition to the OPS should not be a **weapon for downsizing the government**. It should be used to argue for a more **equitable distribution of resources** and **universal provisions of public goods**.

A **participatory pension for government employees** will provide a more **egalitarian outcome**. To protect employees from the vagaries of the market, the government can tweak the NPS to provide a **guaranteed monthly return**.

Administrative reforms are required to address unequal pay among various ranks of employees. Government employees as a group have a **voice and easy access to decision -making**. They can demand **rationalisation of political executives' pensions and profligacy**.

They can also exert influence to introduce **progressive taxation for the top 10%** to address poverty and growing inequality.

13. [What is the IPCC synthesis report and what does it say?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“What is the IPCC synthesis report and what does it say?”** and **“Final solution – Concerted effort alone can save earth from worst of climate change effects”** published in **The Hindu** on **23rd March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About IPCC Synthesis Report for the Sixth Assessment Cycle.

News: Recently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its Synthesis Report for the Sixth Assessment Cycle.

What is a Synthesis Report?

The Synthesis Report is a compilation of the main findings of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, based on results from three Working Groups (WGs). WG I evaluated the physical science basis of climate change; WG II evaluated the impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability, and WG III evaluated the mitigation.

Must read: [Synthesis Report: IPCC meet in Switzerland: The significance, likely impact](#)
About the key findings and suggestions of the IPCC Synthesis Report for the Sixth Assessment Cycle

-**Climate justice** is crucial because those who have contributed least to climate change are being disproportionately affected.

-The planet's best chance to keep temperatures below 1.5°C is to ensure greenhouse gas emissions are reduced to 48% of 2019 levels by 2030 and 99% by 2050.

-Paris Agreement targets cannot be met without negative emissions, or carbon dioxide removal and would entail untested technologies that now appear to be impractically expensive

Must read: [IPCC Synthesis Report of the Sixth Assessment Cycle \(AR6\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

What suggestions are given by the IPCC Synthesis Report for the Sixth Assessment Cycle?

Focus on climate resilient development: This not only mitigate the effects of climate change but also provide wider benefits.

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14. [Tremors From Himalayas – Chardham Project work in high-risk seismic zones can put tremendous pressure on a super-sensitive ecological area](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Tremors From Himalayas – Chardham Project work in high-risk seismic zones can put tremendous pressure on a super-sensitive ecological area**” published in **The Times of India** on **23rd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3: Disaster Management.

Relevance: About widening roads in Char dham.

News: Recently, the National Capital Region felt long-lasting tremors. This is a cause of worry as much of the North is categorised under various risk-prone seismic zones.

Why North India is more vulnerable to earthquakes?

North India lies in a major geological faultline, the Main Central Thrust Line. This is formed when the Indian (tectonic) plate is pushed under the Eurasian plate. This is categorised under the highest seismic zones 4 and 5.

About the Chardham Project work in high-risk seismic zone

Bhagirathi ecosensitive zone is a 100-km stretch of valley and sheer cliff through which Ganga flows from Gaumukh glacier. The government is starting work on widening the road to 12m width as part of its [Chardham Pariyojana \(CDP\)](#).

The SC bench led by Justice Nariman formed a high-powered committee (HPC) to ensure the project conformed to the Himalayan terrain. The committee recommended a narrower “intermediate width”.

Accordingly, the ministry of road transport and highways (MoRTH) had amended the width reducing it to “intermediate width”. But later, the CDP was changed into a defence project. Thus nullifying the committee recommendations. This wider road requires a ‘right of way’ double that of an intermediate width.

Read more: [SC approves widening of three Char Dham highways](#)

What are the concerns in widening roads in Char dham?

Neglected HPC recommendations: HPC members were unanimous that “road widening activities should only be undertaken after... environment impact assessment and mitigation measures” are done. Further, it recommended, the “felling of deodar trees should be avoided”. But 8,000 deodars have been demarcated for felling in Bhagirathi zone alone.

Increased landslide: An unprecedented number of 200+ landslides have been reported on the CDP route since hill-cutting began.

Not followed other protocols: The environment ministry’s latest guidelines for highways in border areas mandate slope assessment, which has not been done. Even if it is done, the report is not in the public domain yet.

Read more: [Explained: What’s in Uttarakhand’s Char Dham Act, and why it is being withdrawn](#)

What should be done?

Follow checks and balances: Violation of checks and balances has resulted in the flooding of Kedarnath, Asi Ganga flooding of 2012, the Rishiganga floods of 2021, the Joshimath subsidence and other disasters. So, the government should strictly follow the conditions.

Follow farsighted approach: Building infrastructure in the Himalayas needs a carefully considered, farsighted, cautious and gentle approach.

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15. [The Trident Approach To Making India An R&D Powerhouse](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The Trident Approach To Making India An R&D Powerhouse**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: measures needed to boost R&D in India

News: The article discusses the problems with scientific research in India and measures needed to boost R&D in India.

What are the problems with scientific research in India?

First, India wants to become a technological expert without focusing on scientific research, which is impossible. For example, without Einstein’s theory of relativity, our GPS devices would have been inaccurate by about eleven kilometres.

Second, India lacks incorporating its scientific research with universities. It is necessary to incorporate because **scientific research is complex and cyclical.** It needs expert scholars to dive in their thoughts on research for its successful practical working.

Third, India’s past regulatory regime didn’t differentiate between universities meant for carrying research and for teaching.

However, all these concerns have been addressed by National Education Policy 2020.

How did National Education Policy 2020 address the problems?

NEP 2020 tackles all three issues by categorizing India’s higher education system in three tiers – **1)** Research universities (full spectrum, strong PhD programmes, small numbers), **2)** Universities (focus on undergraduate and master’s degrees), and **3)** Colleges (focus on undergraduate degrees with large numbers and low costs).

However, in order to achieve these targets a proper approach would be needed.

What can be done to for proper implementation of the NEP 2020’s categorization?

Clustering: It involves **drafting a budget that would merge city-wide scientific institutions into a single university** while keeping identity and autonomy of the individual institutions.

The cluster would work together and have expertise and scale in research strategy, academic excellence, global collaboration, fund generation, etc. **This would tackle the problem of university research in silos.**

University engagement: Universities conducting research should be engaged with the relevant companies. It is important because **71% of global R&D spending comes from them.**

For example, US and China’s R&D spending is 36 and 16 times more than India’s because their companies and universities work together.

Financing: It involves **establishing the National Research Foundation (NRF)** to provide universities with merit-based research funding under its supervision while also taking monetary risks on the research.

Must Read: [Research and Development in India: Status, Challenges and Recommendations](#)

What can be the way ahead?

Foreign weapon purchases have decreased by 11% since 2013, owing to the growth of R&D in defense, but there is still more to be done to limit weapon imports. This can be accomplished by providing financing for university research.

Moreover, bringing science and technology to universities will also boost size of India’s domestic defence industry, industry-creating startups, and universities.

16. Is India in the grip of a 'stray dog' crisis?

Source- The post is based on the article "Is India in the grip of a 'stray dog' crisis?" published in "The Hindu" on 24th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Government policies and interventions

Relevance- Issues related to animal protection

News- In recent weeks, there have been many attacks by stray dogs on people, especially children.

Are stray dogs a global problem?

This is not an Indian problem. It is very much a **global issue**. This is primarily because people like dogs and want to keep them.

Globally, supply always tends to exceed the demand for dogs. As a result, the **surplus animals** end up on the streets.

How is India's approach towards stray dogs different from other countries?

The U.S. has a **zero tolerance policy** for stray dogs. They are **euthanized** every year. In India, we allow those animals to end up on the streets, and leave them there. This is in violation of our laws.

In case of India, the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act** recognises that dogs suffer on the streets due to homelessness and also impact human beings. They should therefore be **sheltered, re-homed, removed or euthanised**.

State Municipal Acts also mandate capture and removal, and they should be **sheltered, re-homed or euthanised**.

Historically, euthanasia was done in a **crude, haphazard manner**. Municipalities used the cheapest methods of killing them. Now, India has ended the mass killing and dogs are left on the road.

Stray dogs are being identified as **community dogs** and are now considered part of the community.

What are the reasons for the increasing menace of stray dogs?

The **2001 Animal Birth Control Rules** took away the **powers to euthanize** by creating a category called 'street dogs' as opposed to strays.

The Ministry of Urban Development is supposed to bring together the **policy and technical aspects**. But, it does not have **capacity and interest** to get into sections of laws.

The Municipal Acts are ignored by officers. Their decisions are influenced by the **political atmosphere**. The political aspects depend on **people's beliefs**. The general sense among people is that stray dogs are a **public good**.

There is a lack of **human supervision and control** due to confusion related to legal aspects for stray dogs. Dogs go back to the **feral state**. These large packs of dogs are becoming **territorial and aggressive about public spaces** where they are fed.

The courts have said there should be **designated places** for dogs to be fed and that these should be defined by the **municipal and the Animal Welfare Board and the local Resident Welfare Associations**.

But these three bodies are unlikely to come together for thousands of streets, societies and colonies in a State or in a city. There are issues with **monitoring of these places** also.

What is the way forward to resolve the issue of stray dogs?

Citizens will not accept euthanasia, even in the case of terminally ill animals. This would have to be **built into people's thinking**. This is a **public health responsibility**.

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Euthanasia or sterilisation cannot be the only answer to the problem. For instance, the most the prolific breeding population would have to be **sterilised**. Sick animals, aggressive animals, would have to be **euthanized**. A segment of the population can be **sheltered**.

We have to recognise that dogs are **domestic companion animals** and must be treated as such. They have **no role ecologically or otherwise** on the streets and in public places without human supervision. This is the starting point of all dog control in the country.

It is the duty of officials to **implement the law** and of legislators to amend law. **Political will** is necessary for it. Courts must **stop the ambivalence** in interpreting the law.

17. India's push for semiconductors

Source- The post is based on the article "India's push for semiconductors" published in the "The Hindu" on 24th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance- Manufacturing sector

News- The Union Government has disbursed around ₹1,645 crore in performance linked incentives (PLI) for electronics manufacturers so far, as part of its efforts to bring in more of the electronics supply chain to India.

Why is the government encouraging semiconductor manufacturing?

Semiconductor fabrication units, or fabs turn raw elements such as silicon into **integrated circuits** that are fit to be a part of practically all electronic hardware in the world.

Fabs are highly **capital- intensive undertakings**, costing billions of dollars for large facilities.

They require highly **reliable and high quality** supply of water, electricity, and insulation from the elements, reflecting the **high degree of precision**.

Countries look at semiconductor manufacturing from a **strategic perspective**. They want to have a share in the value chain for fabs, even if costs are high.

According to a report by the **Semiconductor Industry Association**, China pulled ahead of Taiwan last year, in terms of share of global sales from fabs.

It's not just India that is wary of this dominance. The U.S. passed the **CHIPS Act** last August. It provides subsidies and investments to manufacturers for making semiconductors in the U.S. This has been combined with restrictions on the Chinese semiconductor industry.

What is the status of semiconductor manufacturing in India?

The government's Invest India agency estimates that electronics manufacturing as a whole will be worth **\$300 billion by the financial year 2025-26**.

Facilities for assembling finished products have been steadily growing in number. But fabrication units for making chipsets and displays are rarer.

What is the suitability of India for manufacturing both semiconductors and finished products?

SIA, US semiconductor manufacturers said in a report with APCO Worldwide in February that India should **lean on its strength in the electronics manufacturing value chain**.

The companies which turn silicone into semiconductors require **high investments** and entry costs run into billions of dollars.

But companies that specialise in **Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT)** are less expensive to set up, and generate **better margins**.

The OSAT facilities focus upon less capital- intensive parts of chipmaking, such as assembling the precise components that have already been manufactured. India should focus on it.

A problem with many chip facilities is that they tend to be captive units of large companies. Some of Foxconn's assembly facilities are dedicated to building Apple devices.

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What are the advantages enjoyed by India in semiconductor manufacturing?

A large part of semiconductor manufacturing involves **design and intellectual labour**. India has an advantage here. A **large portion of semiconductor design engineers** globally are either Indian or Indian Origin.

This is an advantage as China is on backfoot due to sanctions and an ageing population.

Why should India's semiconductor ambition be limited?

The government appears to be developing the parts of the fabs ecosystem that have promise for **sustainable growth and fiscal feasibility**.

Electronics value chain would have to be an **international partnership** among nations with common goals.

Like-minded nations should **specialize in different aspects** of the semiconductor and electronics manufacturing process.

18. Next-generation tech – on 6 G Technology

Source- The post is based on the article “Next-generation tech” published in the “Business Standard” on 23rd March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance- Latest development in field of communication technology

News- few months after the formal launch of commercial **5G** service, India is set to commit resources to the development of 6G technologies with the release of a vision document and the inauguration of a 6G testbed for research & development (R&D).

What are some facts about 6G technology?

6G will be 100 times faster than 5G.

It will have **multiple applications**. The 6G network could enable a host of autonomous cars to talk to one another in real time as they navigate crowded urban landscapes.

Virtual reality without lags could become a reality. **Edge computing, where AI is deployed extensively**, will be a possibility.

6G aims to be **more energy-efficient** and better at using whatever spectrum is available for the network. It would have huge **positive externalities**.

How can G be defined?

Every “G” from 2G onwards can be described as a set of **globally agreed benchmarks** that allow for standardized networks to interact with one another and equipment that can be used everywhere.

R&D at every stage has been focused on developing ways to **transfer data more efficiently, and to develop new use cases**.

What is the government plan to develop 6G?

India will set up **six technology-innovation groups** to explore the possibilities and drive R&D into possible directions that 6G could go.

The groups will **identify priority areas for research** involving industry, academia, and service providers in this process.

The R&D would encompass all areas from **mmWave and Terahertz communications, to fibre-broadband, remote operations, multi-sensor man-machine interfaces and devices leveraging edge cloud computing**.

What are the aspects that should be considered while launching 6G?

Earlier launching could give India the leverage to **mould 6G standards** in advantageous ways. It will generate **intellectual property (IP)** that could make it a world leader as 6G evolves.

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The initiative must be followed through with **robust policy implementation**. Policymakers must ensure that roll-outs of commercial networks are not delayed.

In the case of 5G, India has been late in terms of network roll-outs due to **complex telecom policy and the resulting litigation**. Policymakers need to learn from those mistakes.

19. [Phone A Friend Friend-shoring is a chance for India to get deeply into telecom supply chains. But trade needs to be more open](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Phone A Friend Friend-shoring is a chance for India to get deeply into telecom supply chains. But trade needs to be more open**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About telecom supply chains.

News: The [International Telecommunication Union \(ITU\)](#) has opened an area office and innovation centre in India. Further, India has also launched the domestic 6G test bed.

About telecom supply chains

China has a significant share in the supply chains of many products. Apart from that, Vietnam also has a significant presence in supply chains.

Apart from Asia, Mexico has the advantage of an FTA with both the US and Canada.

How India is improving its telecom supply chains?

India’s trustworthiness is in sync with the phenomenon of friend-shoring.

Note: Friend-shoring is a concept where supply chain relocation is influenced by similar values. In addition to making rapid progress in key measures such as logistics and human capital, India’s trade policy has seen it join critical regional trade agreements such as RCEP and CPTPP. On the manufacturing side, India has **a) [Production-linked Incentive \(PLI\) schemes](#)**, which incentivise companies through a subsidy to offset other disadvantages, **b) States separately offer incentives to attract manufacturing investments.**

What needs to be done to further improve telecom supply chains?

Leverage market: An industrial policy that encourages manufacturing is essential but the returns may be limited. For example, Taiwan’s technology investment in China was around 33% since 2012. Though the investment has plateaued, Taiwan’s deep specialisation characteristic of technology supply chains makes relocation slow-paced.

Hence, India needs to leverage the scale of its market and the overall economy.

Open trade policy: Open trade policy is needed for increasing the quantum of manufacturing investments in India.

20. [IPCC AR6 synthesis report: A climate change survival guide to act on](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A climate change survival guide to act on**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About IPCC AR6 synthesis report.

News: Recently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its Synthesis Report for the Sixth Assessment Cycle.

What is a Synthesis Report?

Must read: [Synthesis Report: IPCC meet in Switzerland: The significance, likely impact](#)

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About the key findings and suggestions of the IPCC AR6 synthesis report

World on the threshold of carbon budget: The IPCC report points out that humanity had already consumed 4/5ths of its total carbon budget for 1.5° C by 2019, with developed economies consuming the lion's share.

Some losses and damages of climate change are inevitable: The report finds that some coastal and polar ecosystems have already reached hard limits in their ability to adapt to a changing climate.

Cautions against maladaptation: The report cautions against certain forms of adaptation such as poorly planned seawalls which can defer and intensify the impacts of climate for short-term and often iniquitous adaptation gains.

Co-benefits of climate action for air quality: A cost-benefit analysis suggests that the air quality and health benefits of mitigation outweigh its costs.

Evidence of progress: The report finds some tangible evidence of progress in the proliferation of laws and policies, and confirms the effectiveness of existing policy tools such as regulations and carbon markets.

What are the concerns highlighted by the IPCC AR6 synthesis report?

a) There are gaps between modelled sustainable pathways and countries' climate pledges, **b)** Delayed action from countries risks the creation of high carbon infrastructure in this decade, and creating stranded assets and financial instability in the medium term, **c)** Despite sufficient global capital, both adaptation and mitigation financing need to increase many-fold.

The IPCC AR6 synthesis report is a landmark report because it offers a blueprint for sustainable development. It is now up to governments and the people of the world to act.

Must read: [IPCC Synthesis Report of the Sixth Assessment Cycle \(AR6\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

21. IPCC Synthesis Report of the Sixth Assessment Cycle

Source- The post is based on the article “**Latest climate report highlights challenges of attaining Paris Pact’s target**” published in “**The Indian Express**” and “**Defusing the climate bomb**” on **25th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issues related to climate change

News- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its final report of the sixth assessment cycle, titled “AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023”

What are key findings of the IPCC Synthesis Report?

The GHG emissions have pushed the global average temperature up by nearly **1.2 degrees Celsius** since 1850.

If no concrete action is taken on climate change, temperatures could rise to **well above 2°C** by the end of this century.

The pace of increase in GHG emissions has come down in the past five years. However, the world is close to exhausting its **carbon budget**. By the first half of the 2030s, the **climate crisis** could become **irreversible**.

To limit temperature increase below the **threshold level of 1.5 degrees Celsius**, temperatures **must peak by 2025 and decline by 43% in the next five years**.

The report is clear that an overshoot of the threshold level of 1.5 degrees Celsius is inevitable. But, **deep and sustained cuts to fresh emissions** that lead to net negative emissions after 2050 can bring the global heat down by 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century.

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In 2014, **Earth atmospheric concentration of CO2** was 397.45 ppm. In 2023, it is at 418 ppm. Atmospheric CO2 concentrations today are higher than at any time in at least 2 million years. The amount of methane in the atmosphere is the highest it has been for 800,000 years.

What is the relevance of the IPCC synthesis report?

The synthesis report is aimed at policymakers. In order to reach the 1.5 degree goal, **deep and ambitious reductions** are necessary. This report should be taken very seriously by governments at all levels.

The **current discourse of extreme weather events** has placed climate change in the public eye. Policymakers also understand its nuances. There is a lot more interest in science, a lot more appetite for action. Despite this, climate action is **“piecemeal and reactive”**.

The report is a synthesis of **knowledge on climate change, the magnitude of the problem, and its various solutions**. The synthesis report is a repository of our **best available climate science** that is also **policy-relevant**.

The report has a list of options related to **mitigation, adaptation** for countries depending on their **national circumstances**. There is now **enough scientific evidence** for governments to act. Such reports would also facilitate **cross-learning** between states, cities and regions. It is important to **keep repeating** the scientific warnings until there is **meaningful action**.

What is the way forward to tackle climate change?

There is a need for **country-specific, or even region-specific**, synthesis reports, especially for a country like India. There should be **regular, institutionalised monitoring and progress** of endeavours such as state action plans on climate change.

Climate issues must come on to **party manifestos**, into **daily conversations** in schools, and in **our newsrooms**. It's a **whole-of-society issue**. It must be treated as such.

22. [Don't Look Back – Don't change NPS's fiscal fundamentals](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Don't Look Back – Don't change NPS's fiscal fundamentals”** published in **The Times of India** on **25th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: About NPS.

News: Recently Finance Minister has made an announcement on the National Pension Scheme (NPS) in Lok Sabha.

About the announcement on NPS

A committee will be set up under the finance secretary. The committee will be tasked to evolve an approach for balancing the needs of government employees without diluting fiscal prudence. It will be designed for adoption by both states and the Centre.

Read more: [National Pension Scheme for traders fails to gain traction](#)

About NPS

NPS was introduced two decades ago as a reform to ensure fiscal stability. It replaced the incoming government servants with a guaranteed pension, OPS.

NPS has tried to create schemes to attract savings from unorganised sector workers to provide an old age savings corpus.

Must read: [Comparison of National Pension Scheme with Old Pension System – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done while revising the NPS?

Keep in mind the fiscal fallout: The proposed committee should keep in mind that the defence ministry is struggling to cope with the fiscally unwise OROP for ex-servicemen.

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Recently the Supreme Court allowed the government to pay out OROP arrears of Rs 28,000 crore to safeguard defence preparedness. The incident encapsulates the fiscal fallout of guaranteed pensions.

Pension comprises only a small corpus of the labour force: India's labour force is dominated by the self-employed. So, it is unfair provide a guaranteed pensions for a tiny fraction of the workforce.

Read more: [The old pension scheme as a burden on the poor](#)