



9 PM Compilation

March, 2023

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General Studies Paper –1

General Studies - 1

1. [Antiquities abroad: What Indian, international laws say](#)

Source: The post is based on the articles

“Antiquities abroad: What Indian, international laws say” published in the **Indian Express** on **14th March 2023**.

“IE-ICIJ investigation of Indian antiquities in US museums” published in the **Indian Express** on **16th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 1: Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Relevance: About protecting antiquities and challenges associated.

News: Private research has found that the catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, includes at least 77 items with links to a smuggler, who is serving a 10-year jail term in Tamil Nadu.

What is an antiquity?

The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 defined “antiquity” as any coin, sculpture, painting, epigraph or other work of art or craftsmanship and others that “has been in existence for **not less than one hundred years**.”

For “manuscript, record or other documents which are of scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic value”, this duration is **not less than seventy-five years**.

What do international conventions say about protecting antiquities?

The UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property defined “cultural property” as the property designated by countries having “importance for archaeology, prehistory, history, literature, art or science.”

The convention also said that “the illicit import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property is one of the main causes of the impoverishment of the cultural heritage of the countries of origin.

What steps have been undertaken by the government for protecting antiquities?

-Before Independence, an Antiquities (Export Control) Act had been passed in April 1947 to ensure that “no antiquity could be exported without license.”

-Item-67 of the Union List, Item-12 of the State List, and Item-40 of the Concurrent List of the Constitution deal with the country’s heritage.

– In 1958, The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act was enacted.

-The government also enacted the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 (AATA). It has been implemented since 1976. Under AATA, “Every person who owns, controls or is in possession of any antiquity” shall register such antiquity before the registering officer “and obtain a certificate in token of such registration.”

How India can bring back antiquities from other countries?

There are three categories of antiquities. These are **a)** antiquities taken out of India pre-independence; **b)** Those which were taken out since independence until March 1976, i.e. before the implementation of AATA; and **c)** Antiquities taken out of the country since April 1976.

For items in the first two categories, requests have to be raised bilaterally or on international fora. Antiquities in the second and third categories can be retrieved easily by raising an issue bilaterally with proof of ownership and with the help of the UNESCO convention.

What are the challenges in Retrieving Stolen Idols and Artefacts?

Non-availability of FIR: According to the UNESCO Convention, the first thing to prove the ownership of the artefacts of the country is the complaint report (FIR in India). But in many cases, there is no FIR in India.

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Lack of proper data: Since Independence, only 486 artefacts have been reported missing from the monuments preserved by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). But there is a large gap between what is reported as missing and what is surfacing now in foreign museums.

The inefficiency of the ASI: a) 2013 report of CAG highlighted that the agency “has no vigilance or monitoring cell to function as a deterrence against theft of antiquities”, b) the 2005 report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee highlighted that the ASI’s inability to access the latest technology.

Must read: [Retrieving Stolen Idols and Artefacts: Initiatives, Challenges and Way Forward – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done for protecting antiquities?

–**Mirdha Committee (in 1984)** had recommended that the ASI “should be accorded the status of a scientific and technical institution and provided autonomy in its functioning”. This should be fulfilled.

–The government should address the “lack of resources” issue with Indian Museums.

2. [The colonial past is still relevant](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The colonial past is still relevant**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **16th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Colonization and decolonization

Relevance– Colonial legacies and associated challenges

News– Colonialism remains a relevant factor in understanding the problems and the dangers of the present world.

What are the challenges related to colonialism in modern times?

The residual problems from the end of the earlier era of colonization remain **unresolved**. The conflicts in western Sahara, Jammu and Kashmir, Cyprus and Palestine are **legacies of colonialism**. The factors responsible for these events in the colonial era have the **potential to reignite conflicts**. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea was due to **undefined colonial borders**.

Intellectual history of colonialism– It is the cause of more recent conflicts. For example – the **Belgian classification of Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi** continues to haunt the region of the African Great Lakes.

The **British invention of “martial races”** in India is another example. Colonial rulers promoted the **policy of “divide and rule”**. It promoted **political divisions** between Hindus and Muslims that led to the **tragedy of Partition**.

Colonial-era distinctions: Such colonial era distinctions were accompanied by an **unequal distribution of the resources** of the state within colonial society. **For example**, Belgian colonialists favoured Tutsis. It led to Hutu rejecting them as foreign supporters.

In the present such example, Sinhalese were against **privileges enjoyed by the Tamils** in the colonial era in Sri Lanka. It prompted the **discriminatory policies** after Independence and the Tamil revolt.

Mixed colonial history– It is also a **potential source of danger**. When a state has more than one colonial past, its future is vulnerable.

Ethnicity or language hardly seem to be a factor in the secessions of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. Rather, it was **different colonial experiences** that separated them from the rest of their ethnic compatriots.

A similar example is **Yugoslavia, made up of regions that had been under different empires**. A Part of the country had been under **Austro--Hungarian rule** for 800 years. Other regions were under Ottoman suzerainty. In 1991, a war erupted between these 2 regions in the country.

Border issues– Boundaries drawn in colonial times still create **enormous problems of national unity**, especially in Africa. Civil conflict along ethnic or regional lines can arise when the **challenge of nation- building within colonial drawn boundaries** becomes insurmountable.

colonial powers drew national boundaries in an **arbitrary way**. **Older tribal and clan loyalties** in Africa were destroyed by the **boundaries drawn by the west**. Civil wars happen when **local leaders challenge a “national” leader** whose nationalism fails to resonate across his country.

Crisis of governance– State failure in the wake of colonialism is another evident source of conflict. It is a by-product of the **newly independent state’s inability to govern**.

The crisis of governance in many African countries is **cause for concern in world affairs today**.

The collapse of effective central governments in Sierra Leone and South Sudan, Liberia and Somalia can lead to alarming possibilities.

Underdevelopment in post colonial societies is itself a cause of conflict. The **uneven development of infrastructure** in a poor country for the benefit of the colonialists has led to uneven distribution of resources. It leads to **increasing fissures in a society** between neglected regions” and better served regions.

Advancing underdevelopment in many countries of the South has created **conditions of desperate poverty, ecological collapse and rootless, unemployed populations**. These are beyond the control of state systems.

3. [Indus Valley Civilisation differs from others as inequality levels were far lower](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Indus Valley Civilisation differs from others as inequality levels were far lower... likely because the Indus changed course often**” published in **The Times of India** on **17th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Ancient History

Relevance: About Ancient Civilizations

News: The article explains the similarities and differences amongst the ancient civilizations.

What were the similarities and differences amongst the ancient civilizations?

The big cities in the ancient civilizations grew in places that could support large populations such as where there were plenty of good soil and lots of water to support the people.

Population densities grew in the early cities of the Indus Valley, the Nile, Mesopotamia, and the civilizations around the Yellow River in China because the climatic conditions of those cities provided food to people.

Due to which, people in these civilizations lived close to each other. However, living close to each other also caused disease to spread amongst the large number of people.

Urban settlements of these civilizations **later shifted towards property rights**; writing systems; social and economic hierarchies and more.

However, **the Indus Valley Civilisation differs from others because inequality levels were far lower than other civilizations**. This was because the Indus, unlike the other rivers, changed its course often.

This changed the structure of the society of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Must Read: [Indus valley Civilization: Important aspects and new developments](#)

4. [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.

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.

5. Vaikom, a satyagraha, and the fight for social justice

Source- The post is based on the article “India’s DPIs, catching the next wave” published in “The Hindu” on 30th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Modern Indian history

Relevance- Social movements before independence

News- The article explains the Vaikom movement.

What are some facts about the Vaikom movement?

Vaikom was a **temple street entry movement** launched in 1924.

The purpose was to end the **prohibition imposed on backward communities** in using the roads around the Vaikom Mahadeva temple.

It was launched by leaders in Kerala such as **T.K. Madhavan, K.P. Kesava Menon and George Joseph**, on the **advice of Mahatma Gandhi**. The movement was sustained and successfully conducted by **Periyar E.V. Ramasamy**.

How the movement started and sustained with time?

The committee against untouchability launched the protest on March 30, 1924, when three persons from various communities were prevented from entering the temple streets.

The protest sustained itself for more than one and a half years, leading to many arrests and satyagrahis being jailed. Police started to **arrest the leaders** of the protest.

Their arrests **created a vacuum** as there was no leader to lead the protest. Then Periyar decided to lead the protest.

As a mark of appreciation, the editor of Tamil journal Navasakthi and scholar, Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundaram, conferred the title **Vaikom Veerar on Periyar**.

What are some significant events related to movement?

The Vaikom movement consists of **day-to-day protests, arrests, of inquiries, jail terms and agitations**.

There was also the support of the higher castes for a 13-day march to the capital. A resolution was introduced in the Assembly in support of the **free entry to the streets around the temple (Sanchara)**. But it was defeated.

Mahatma Gandhi arrived to negotiate between the government, protesters and orthodox Hindus. Since Mahatma Gandhi insisted that it **should be a local protest**, requests to make it a **pan-India movement** failed.

The **traditionalists** caused many troubles for the satyagrahis. It included **counter rallies** marked by violence. The resolution for the **right to sanchara** was defeated in the Assembly by the open support of the traditionalists. They were backed by the government and the administration.

Tamil Nadu played a pivotal role in Vaikom Satyagraha. Periyar and Kovai Ayyamuthu, a firebrand leader, worked in tandem with leaders in Kerala. But they faced repressive action.

How does the movement end?

The movement **ended on November 23, 1925**. The 19 leaders, including Periyar, Kesava Menon and T.K. Madhavan, was released on August 30, 1924.

The rally by the upper castes that began on November 1, reached Trivandrum on November 13, submitting its memorandum to the Queen regent.

Mahatma Gandhi held talks with the **Queen of Travancore, social reformer Narayana Guru, traditionalists and police commissioner W.H. Pitt**.

On November 17, the satyagrahis announced their **decision to withdraw** their protest. On November 23, the government of the Travancore princely state declared that people could enter three of the four streets around Vaikom temple.

6. [Misogyny in the matrimonial market: Data shows Indian men prefer wives without jobs](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Misogyny in the matrimonial market: Data shows Indian men prefer wives without jobs**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **1st April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Social empowerment. GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance– Issues related to women empowerment

News– A recent study we carried out on a large matrimonial website to understand the marital preferences of men.

What are the main findings of a survey of the matrimonial websites?

Female profiles who were employed received nearly 15% fewer responses from male relative to those who were not working. The preference for **non-working female partners** holds across all education groups of female profiles.

Moreover, women employed in “**masculine**” occupations were 3% less likely to receive responses compared to women employed in “**feminine**” occupations.

A woman in a “masculine” job who stated a **preference to continue** to work after marriage was less likely to generate male interest, relative to a woman in a “feminine” job who **preferred to continue** working.

Profiles of working women generated less interest from men even when their caste, education levels and family incomes matched those of the men.

Further, the level of discrimination against working women was higher by male with lower education levels.

How does the working status of a married woman have an impact on domestic work performed by women?

In urban India, married women spend almost **7.5 times more time on domestic work** as compared to married men. As per **Time Use Survey 2019**; women in north India spend more time on domestic work relative to women in the south.

Women who are not working spend much more time on domestic work. It is more than women in “**feminine**” occupations and much more than those in “**masculine**” fields. These findings suggest that **male-dominated occupations** may be characterised by more **inflexible working schedules**.

Other evidence suggests that women in male-dominated occupations may even be considered “**sexually impure**” due to greater interactions with men at work.

What are the socio-economic impacts of marriage preferences?

The marriage preferences are likely to contribute to India’s persistently **low female labour force participation** and high levels of **occupational segregation by gender**.

This segregation may also perpetuate the **gender gap in earnings**, because “feminine” occupations pay 30% lower daily wages on average than “masculine” occupations.

General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. [Caste System In Indian Prisons: Unconstitutional But Legal](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Caste System In Indian Prisons: Unconstitutional But Legal**” published in **The Times of India** on 6th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 –Governance

Relevance: Prison Reforms

News: The article discusses the prevalent caste system in Indian prisons and measures required to bring reforms.

How is the caste system still present in Indian prisons?

The law that governs management and administration of prisons is still the colonial era law – **Prisons Act, 1894**.

The idea of purity and impurity is still present in the **prison manuals**.

Persons from the most marginalised and disadvantaged castes are often expected to perform activities like manual scavenging, cleaning and sweeping.

Manual scavenging is prohibited by the **Prohibition of Employment as Manual scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**.

However, this law has not been able to prohibit manual scavenging in the Indian prisons because the 2013 Act **does not cover prison administration**.

Prison manuals also protect the status of “**savarna Hindus**” by ensuring they enjoy a monopoly on cooking and carrying the food for all prisoners.

Christmas and Easter are recognized as jail holidays while Diwali is excluded from it.

Therefore, the Constitution of India and acts like Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1980 have not been able to prevent discrimination in Indian prisons.

What are some steps taken at the global level for better treatment of prisoners?

The United Nations General Assembly in 2015 adopted the **Nelson Mandela Rules**. These rules provide for all prisoners to be treated with dignity and state that there should be no discrimination amongst the inmates on the grounds of status.

These rules are however **not binding but they help at strengthening prison management** and providing humane conditions for inmates.

The Ministry of Home Affairs released a **Model Prison Manual in 2016**, based on the Nelson Mandela Rules, for all states to adopt.

However, states never felt the need to bring changes in its prison system and re-evaluate its prison manuals.

What measures can be adopted to bring equality amongst the prisoners?

First, state governments should amend outdated prison manuals and adopt the Model Prison Manual of 2016.

Second, state governments should ensure the implementation of change in policy, sensitization programmes for prison authorities and awareness campaigns for prisoners.

Third, reconsider the draconian provisions of the Prisons Act, 1894.

2. The hardships of a career in Ayurvedic practice

Source– The post is based on the article “**The hardships of a career in Ayurvedic practice**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2-

Relevance: Traditional practices of medicine

News- Practice does not seem to be a feasible career option for most Ayurveda graduates. There is a trust- deficit in AYUSH treatment.

What is scepticism among the public about Ayurveda?

There is widespread scepticism in the public mind about the **soundness of Ayurvedic theories and the fruitfulness of its practices**.

The Ayurveda establishment has failed to keep pace with the **intellectual and scientific advances** of the times. A major reason for the **trust -deficit** in Ayurveda is its diminished **evidence based quality**.

Another perception is that Ayurveda treatments are **slow to heal**.

Why the view that Ayurveda is slow to heal is not correct?

Ayurveda's thrust is on patient benefit and not merely on **patient gratification**. Real patient benefit would be sustainable as opposed to patient gratification which is momentary.

Sustainability of treatments requires a **gradual transition from illness to wellness**. Sudden relief is deemed **superficial and temporary**.

Therefore, the popular view that Ayurvedic treatments are slow to heal is thus a half- truth. It can be corrected by appropriate **patient education**.

What are the challenges faced by an Ayurvedic practitioner?

A new Ayurvedic Practitioner faces the difficult realities of **public perception**. College training is a huge corpus of ancient medical wisdom, where has limited practical use.

Ayurveda does not have a **vibrant ecosystem of science and research**. The poor practitioner has to depend on himself to discover treatments and approaches that actually work.

The process involves a **lot of trial and error with patients** and predictably leads to an erosion of the practitioner's reputation.

Ayurveda can be used **safely and efficiently** only in about 60%- to 70% of primary care illnesses.

For the rest, it is necessary to **complement Ayurveda with modern medicine**.

Most States prohibit the practice of modern medicine by Ayurveda graduates. The practitioners face difficulties due to it.

Practitioners resort to **gimmickry and publicity, due to general trust deficit**. It is harmful for genuine Ayurveda physicians.

What is the way forward to improve the condition of Ayurvedic practitioners?

Appropriate policy making can solve a lot of these problems.

Rejuvenating primary care is necessary to secure the health of its citizens. Ayurveda graduates can contribute enormously towards this if trained properly.

A proper training of Ayurveda graduates with a view to make them good primary care doctors would involve- (1) A vigorous **evidence based appraisal** of Ayurvedic Theories and practises. (2) **A statutory decision** to allow Ayurveda graduates to practise modern medicine in stipulated primary care areas.

There is a need for **sincerity, straight thinking, and some adventurism** on the part of stakeholders.

3. [India needs to double down on bridging its digital gender gap](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India needs to double down on bridging its digital gender gap**” published in the **mint** on **6th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Social empowerment. GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance: Issues related to women empowerment

News- The article deals with the issue of digital access for women empowerment

What is the status of digital disparity between men and women in India?

According to a **Unicef report**, as many as **90% of the jobs** in the world today have a digital component. These jobs are available only to the digitally able, and to more men than women.

According to the report, in developing countries, only 41% of women have **access to the internet** compared with 53% of men. Women are 20% less likely to own a smartphone and are more likely to borrow phones from a male family member.

The report also says that boys are **1.5 times more likely** to own a mobile phone, and **1.8 times more likely** to own a smartphone than girls.

Another **report by the OECD** revealed that the **gender gap in internet use** is widening. **Software development** remains a **male-dominated field**. Women comprise only 15% of software designers.

Data on the **use of the internet in India** indicates that in comparison with 58% male internet users, female users are only 42%.

Girls and women are denied access to digital technologies because they almost always come second in a **patriarchal social order**. The internet is seen as a ‘**risk to the traditional social order**’ and ‘male gatekeepers’ restrict or control girls’ and women’s access to the internet.

How Covid19 shows the importance of digital access?

Covid has demonstrated the **seminal importance of digital tools** in today’s world. Children struggled to keep up with their studies using the limited smartphones and computers.

UNESCO estimated that around 168 million girls enrolled in pre-primary to tertiary levels of education were affected.

What is the importance of digital inclusion?

Leaving women out of the digital world would amount to denying them **basic skills for survival**. India aims to have a **\$1 trillion digital economy by 2025**. Already, **40% of global digital transactions** take place in India. As economies **digitise further**, most jobs will require some knowledge of digital technology.

In India, front-line workers are using tablets and smartphones. Public schemes such as the PM Janani Suraksha Yojana require beneficiaries to provide their bank account details. **Social and financial inclusion** will necessitate **digital inclusion**.

There are vast opportunities for girls and women to **power India’s digital economy** and benefit from it. Access to digital technology for a young woman can be a game changer with **multiplier effects**.

Digital literacy for women is a necessity if India wants to achieve the ultimate goal of **gender equality**. Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised the need for ‘**women-led development**’ as India took over the G20 presidency.

What is the way forward for bridging the gender gap in digital space?

Leveraging **India’s demographic dividend** requires an equal emphasis on the country’s **gender dividend**.

It will require **smart interventions** specially designed for girls and women in **health, education, employment, banking, skilling and transportation**.

A **favourable policy environment to promote the digital empowerment** of women is a step in the right direction.

4. [The roots of global success – on the global achievements of India diaspora](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The roots of global success**” published in the **Business Standard** on **6th March 2023**.

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

Context – Indians have a remarkable presence in the leadership of global organisations: IBM, Google, Microsoft, and now the World Bank.

What are the reasons behind Indians achieving top leadership positions of global organisations?

India is known for **multiculturalism and tolerance**. Growing up in India involves **accepting, absorbing and interoperating** with many cultures. It involves a **great deal of tolerance**.

This gives Indians a **natural edge in dealing with the cultural diversity** of global organisations, when compared with people who have grown up in a **monoculture**.

What are the implications of its people having top leadership positions in global organisations for India?

The rise of Indians to leadership positions in the world helps to reduce **asymmetric information** and thus **improve global engagement** with India.

Each of these individuals is well plugged into the Indian elite. The top leadership of organisations has an **instinctive common sense** about India. This produces better decisions regarding India. India should think about the **meritocracy** within those organisations.

India will gain by opening up to **greater heterogeneity in our internal culture, to more meritocracy in global recruitment, to more engagement with the outside world**.

How does the pool of knowledgeable persons benefit India?

This creates the **agglomeration economies** of these individuals collaborating and competing with each other. India is a good site for **building research offices** by global corporations. It is the essence of the IT revolution in India.

Why are Chinese not successful in attaining leadership roles in global organisations?

Chinese universities took off only in the last 20 years. Other factors are **English fluency, the homogeneity of Han-Chinese culture, the lack of the full cultural package** located in enlightenment values, and the stifling of imagination by use of state power.

How these developments shape the future in India?

A lot of the Indian elite today does not play in the competitive exams for higher educational institutions.

The average IIT graduate today has read fewer books, seems more like a Chinese STEM graduate, and has less of the **full cultural package** required for rising beyond technical functions.

The domination of the IITs has probably peaked. The leadership cadre will come from a more **diverse array of schools** in India and abroad.

5. [Supreme Court's order on CEC selection panel](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Supreme Court's order on CEC selection panel**” published in the **Indian Express** on **6th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the formation of a selection panel for Election Commissioners.

News: Recently, the Supreme Court has ruled that the appointment of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and election commissioners(ECs) will be done by the President on the advice of a neutral selection committee.

What is the Supreme Court ruling?

Read here: [President to appoint CEC, ECs on advise of committee comprising PM, LoP, CJI: Supreme Court](#)

What are the advantages of the formation of a selection panel?

Read more: [Supreme Court verdict will ensure a more independent Election Commission](#)

What are the challenges associated with the formation of a selection panel?

The presence of a Leader of Opposition: This will ensure a strong case for the Opposition to have a voice in the composition of an institution whose primary job is to conduct free and fair elections.

The presence of CJI: This will violate the constitutional system of checks and balances as it raises doubts regarding the presence of the court's authority in the functioning of ECI.

Regarding the formation of the panel: The SC's Basic Structure doctrine mandates the court to review and restrict Parliament's powers to amend the Constitution's foundational principles. But the SC verdict invites questions about the country's highest court intruding outside its domain.

Other issues: **a)** The Court has prefaced its decision to set up the panel with a mention of the "unrelenting abuse of the electoral process over a period of time". The Court has been very respectful of the EC's powers in the past and there is little evidence for "unrelenting abuse", **b)** The selection panel is similar to the appointment of the CBI director. But CBI's record of prosecution doesn't quite read like an exemplary testament of institutional autonomy. The same might be true for ECI also.

Must read: [Changes to the process of selecting election commissioner: Significance and challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

6. [Power against knowledge: On Centre for Policy Research FCRA licence suspension](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Power against knowledge: On Centre for Policy Research FCRA licence suspension**" published in **The Hindu** on **6th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – The role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

Relevance: About restricting NGO operations.

News: The government has recently suspended the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) licence of the country's premier think tank, the Centre for Policy Research (CPR).

This is due to **a)** lapses in the income-tax paperwork of CPR's staff, **b)** lack of due process in the accounting process, and **c)** diversion of funds to publication of books, which the authorities allege is not part of the CPR's objectives.

What are the concerns associated with invoking CPR Licence and restricting NGO operations?

Firstly, the CPR has been working on improving governance and enhancing state capacity among other things, in collaboration with governments, and the public and private sectors. Hence, the action against the CPR lowers the bar of tolerance for the political establishment to an abysmal level.

Secondly, the FCRA is a regulatory mechanism to ensure that foreign vested interests are not unduly influencing the domestic politics of India. But the application of the law in a manner that clearly disables the non-governmental sector suggests a thoughtless approach bordering on vindictiveness.

Thirdly, India's New Education Policy envisages academic exchanges and cooperation between Indian and global institutions to raise the standard of higher education and research in the country. However, India's global ambitions are clashing with insecure and reactionary actions such as the restrictions on the CPR.

Fourthly, assuming Indian thinking should be insulated from foreign ones, while seeking international technology and capital inflow at the same time is a paradox.\

Read more: [Restrictions on NGO activities: Beyond civil society – ‘Protectionism’ in social services is impractical](#)

What should be done instead of restricting NGO operations?

Collaboration with the world requires the flow of information, personnel and funds in both directions. But stringent restrictions on all these for **national security reasons should be exercised sparingly**.

In a country growing as fast as India, a massive expansion in capacity for research is the need of the hour. Along with **public funding, private and philanthropic funding are essential** for India to continuously expand its knowledge horizons in all fields. So, the government should **not only tolerate, but also facilitate the emergence** of several more institutions like CPR.

7. [A ‘Zeitenwende’ in the India-Germany relationship](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “A ‘Zeitenwende’ in the India-Germany relationship” published in **The Hindu** on **7th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and Germany relationship

News- Chancellor Scholz of Germany made a two -day visit to India, that began on February 25, 2023,

How is Germany undergoing major changes in its external approach?

The **Russian invasion of Ukraine** has been a **watershed moment in Germany’s security policy**. It has resulted in the abandonment of **post-war pacific policy towards strategic matters**. This is evident in **Germany’s increased military spending**.

Russia’s war and China’s assertive posturing have brought into question Germany’s approach of change through trade. It has prompted a rethink of its **energy and trade dependencies**. The focus is now on **diversifying economic relations**.

In a departure from **previous Asia policy** that centred around China, Mr. Scholz first visited Japan after assuming office in 2021. He later invited Mr. Modi for the **6th Intergovernmental Consultations** to Berlin.

This enhanced **political outreach to Asia** is part of Germany’s **overall strategy for the Indo-Pacific Region**. It mentions India as a **key partner**.

For Germany, the **stability of supply chains and trade routes** linking Asia to Europe assumes critical importance. The reason is its status as Europe’s **economic powerhouse and its reliance on exports**.

What are the points of convergence between India and Germany?

As ties with Russia and China are uncertain, Europe is prioritising **values based partnerships with like minded countries**. It can advance India--German cooperation.

The German government’s **coalition agreement in 2021** refers to relations with India among its top foreign policy priorities.

Mr. Scholz has expressed Germany’s intent to enhance its **strategic involvement in the Indo-Pacific through greater military deployment**.

Germany’s symbolic gesture of **sending its frigate Bayern to the Indo-Pacific in 2021**, with a stopover in Mumbai was a demonstration of this.

A recent agreement on **India--Germany triangular cooperation** involving development projects in third countries is also an important step in this direction.

What is the status of the bilateral relationship between India and Germany?

Defence and security– New Delhi attempts to **diversify from its military dependence** on Russia. Berlin is also **reassessing its arms exports policy**. Germany could become an **important defence partner** for India.

The recent meetings between heads of the states included discussions around **co-development of military hardware and tech transfers**.

A deal worth \$5.2 billion where Germany would jointly build **six conventional submarines in India** could be underway. Besides, the first ever **France--India--Germany military exercise drill** is slated to take place in 2024.

Yet, it is important for the two countries to set **realistic expectations in the security realm**. Despite their common concerns regarding stability in the Indo-Pacific, Germany does not share a border with China.

India has **territorial conflicts** with China. Despite the lack of German trust in China, there exists **economic interdependence**.

It is encouraging that Germany is drafting a **new official China strategy** amidst a wider national security strategy.

On global issues– India and Germany also cooperate in **multilateral forums, as part of the G-4 grouping** pushing for United Nations Security Council reform.

Discussions on the Russia- Ukraine conflict and its **global repercussions** were the **centre stage of talks** between two Modi and Scholaz. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reiterated India's commitment to contribute to any peace process.

Economy– Germany is **India's largest economic partner** in the European Union (EU). The Chancellor had a high powered business delegation with him during visit to India.

Clean energy and green technologies- It has emerged as the central pillar in the partnership. The **Green and Sustainable Development Partnership** was launched last year. There exists cooperation in the area of **green hydrogen**.

Mobility and migration– It is also a focus area. Germany has shortages of **skilled manpower**; where technically skilled Indians could help plug this gap.

What is the future of bilateral partnership?

The relationship is steadily evolving into a more **wholesome Partnership**.

Divergent positions on the war have not undermined India's **regular political engagements** with Europe.

An intensification of the **Russia--China axis** could further embolden this alignment. Against the backdrop of **volatile geopolitical shifts, emerging multipolarity**, India's ties with Germany could be vital in **shaping a new global order**.

8. [The anti-defection law is facing convulsions](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"The anti-defection law is facing convulsions"** published in **The Hindu** on **7th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian constitution

News- Parliament enacted the anti defection law in 1985 to curb political defection. The promise of political stability provided by the law seems to be facing challenges, especially in the last five years.

What are the main objectives of anti-defection law?

The first was to curb the act of defection by disqualifying the defecting member.

The second was to **protect political parties from instability**. Frequent defections from even well organised political parties leave them weak. Indian democracy is based essentially on a **party system**. Stable parties are requirements of a **stable democracy**.

How is the stability of parties the principal focus of the 10th schedule?

It is clear from two provisions enacted in the 10th Schedule- the **provision of a split in a political party and that of a merger of two political parties**.

'Split' is no longer a **defence against disqualification** with the deletion of paragraph three of the Schedule. But, a closer look at this erstwhile provision is necessary for a proper understanding of the **true objective of this law**.

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Under this paragraph, if a **split in a political party** results in a faction coming into existence, and **one third of the legislators** move out of the party and **join that faction**, those members could get an **exemption from disqualification**.

The point to note here is that one third of the legislators would get protection only if there was a **split in the original political party**. So, the split in the original political party is the precondition for exempting one third of legislators from disqualification.

Paragraph four protects defecting members from disqualification. The condition is **merger of the original political party** with another party and **two thirds of the legislators agreeing to such a merger**.

It can be analysed from paragraph three and four that the legislators do not have the **freedom to bring about a split or merger**. It is the original political party in both cases which takes that decision.

The argument that the Speaker **cannot make inquiry into the split or merger** is not right. The Speaker takes the decision only after **ascertaining the fact of the merger**.

This means that for exempting defecting legislators from disqualification, merger is taken into account only if two thirds of legislators have agreed to it.

What are the constitutional questions that arose in the Maharashtra case?

The first question that should be decided by the Court is related to the **validity of whip**. The breakaway group of the Members of the Legislative Assembly chose its own whip. It also reportedly issued whips to all the MLAs of the Shiv Sena.

But the question related to the validity of the whip should have been decided on the basis of the **explanation (a) to paragraph 2(1)(a)**. It says that an elected member of a House shall be deemed to belong to the **political party who made them candidate for election**.

This explanation makes it clear that the party which can **legally issue the whip** is the Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray as this is the party which set them up as candidates in the last election. It should not be forgotten that the anti defection law was enacted to **punish defectors, not to facilitate defection**.

The Supreme Court by allowing the Election Commission of India to decide the **petition under paragraph 15 of the symbols order** has put the cart before the horse.

The **10th Schedule** is a **constitutional law** and **paragraph 15 of the symbols order** is **subordinate legislation**. The disqualification proceedings under it should have been given primacy over the proceedings under paragraph 15.

9. Multilateral reforms as a priority in the G-20

Source: The post is based on the article “**Multilateral reforms as a priority in the G-20**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – **Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings**

Relevance: measures required to bring multilateral reforms

News: India in its G20 presidency has decided priorities multilateral reform.

Think 20 (T20), the idea bank of G20 has also come up with the Task Force on ‘Towards Reformed Multilateralism’ (**TF7**). It aims to construct a roadmap for ‘**Multilateralism 2.0**’.

Why has multilateralism lost its importance amongst the nations?

First, multilateralism has lost the majority’s trust due to persistent deadlocks amongst the nations.

Second, multilateralism is facing a utility crisis, where powerful member-states think it is no longer useful for them.

However, in the absence of multilateral cooperation, countries have involved themselves in bilateral, plurilateral, and Mini lateral groupings. This has further contributed to the **polarization of global politics**.

Hence, multilateralism is the need of the hour.

Why is multilateralism needed?

It is because most of the **challenges nations face** today such as conflicts, climate change, migration, macroeconomic instability, etc. **are global in nature** and require global solutions. Furthermore, the **COVID-19 pandemic has reversed the social and economic progress** that the global society made in the past couple of decades.

Hence, there is a need of multilateralism but there are various reasons that make multilateral reform difficult.

Why is multilateral reform difficult?

First, multilateralism is closely associated with global power politics. Therefore, bringing reforms in multilateralism will automatically reform the current distribution of power. Further, modifications in the distribution of power may have adverse implications if not done cautiously.

Second, the status quo powers see multilateral reforms as a zero-sum game. For example, in the context of the Bretton Woods system, the U.S. and Europe believed reform would reduce their influence and dominance. However, it also makes decision making difficult by consensus or voting.

Third, multilateralism has lost its significance due to the emerging multiplex global order. This multiplex global order facilitates the formation of new clubs, concerts and coalitions of the like-minded, which makes the reform of older institutions and frameworks more challenging.

What G-20 and India can do to bring multilateral reforms?

First, the G-20 should focus on setting proper narratives of multilateral reform. It may constitute an engagement group that would be dedicated to bring the narrative of multilateralism at the global level.

India should also urge the upcoming chairs of the G20 grouping, Brazil and South Africa, to place multilateral reforms as their presidential priorities.

Second, competing interests and the dominance of powerful states will stay in multilateral platforms. Therefore, while supporting multilateral cooperation, G-20 should continue encouraging **minilateral groupings** as a new form of multilateralism and try to transform them into **multi-stakeholder partnerships**.

Third, G20 can help in creating issue based minilaterals, particularly in areas related to the governance of the global commons. This will be helpful in preventing competitive coalitions.

Fourth, political will is also required to bring multilateral reforms.

Fifth, the G20 can be a model of multilateralism by overcoming the trust, legitimacy and utility crises of multilateralism.

1. **To enhance its legitimacy**, it can include the African Union as a permanent member and the UN Secretary-General and General Assembly President as permanent invitees.
2. **To address the crisis of trust and utility**, G-20 should put all its efforts into solving one or two global issues such as food, fuel and fertilizer and showcase it as the model of new multilateralism.

10. Petty, ugly & costly: Karnataka is proof how much 'small' corruption hurts India, reputationally & ultimately economically

Source: The post is based on the article **"Petty, ugly & costly: Karnataka is proof how much 'small' corruption hurts India, reputationally & ultimately economically"** published in **The Times of India** on **7th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 2 – Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability.

Relevance: About petty corruption in India.

News: Successive raids in Karnataka have unearthed huge sums of money stashed through petty corruption.

About petty corruption in India

Big-ticket 'scams' dominate the conversation about corruption. But the research estimates suggest that petty corruption in India is bigger than 'scams'.

For instance, in 2020, a report based on a survey on corruption in Asia concluded that India has the highest rate of bribery and use of personal contacts in accessing public services. Many of the respondents indicated that was the only way to access services such as government documents.

Note: India ranked 85th out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index, 2022, with a score below the global average. Within India, Karnataka has a poor record.

What is the reason for increased petty corruption cases in India?

The reasons include **a)** information asymmetry, **b)** poor grievance redressal mechanisms, and **c)** the disproportionate power of different arms of the state.

Speed money is one of the most common manifestations of the system as the bureaucracy is not going to be penalised for delays.

How one can tackle petty corruption?

Two quick ways in which Karnataka and other states can deter petty corruption is to **implement both RTI and state Right to Service Acts**. This will help offset information asymmetry and minimise the opportunities for speed money.

11. [Travel and tourism is poised for its own Amrit Kaal](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Travel and tourism is poised for its own Amrit Kaal**” published in **The Indian Express** on **10th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions. GS3- Economy

Relevance– Issues related to tourism sector

News– India's travel and tourism sector will be the key axis of development in the coming years. Budget 2023 has outlined the path to developing tourism in **mission mode**.

The tourism sector accounts for **10% of the total employment directly and provides 8% of the overall GDP**.

What are the efforts by the Indian government for the growth of tourism?

The Budget Session addressed all the “**6Ps**” effectively by covering **destination planning and management, infrastructure development, sustainability and safety, development of human capital, policy, and process interventions** to align the Centre and states, and **promoting the narrative of Indian tourism**.

The Union budget has listed **six themes** for the development of the sector — **convergence, public-private participation, creativity, innovation, digitisation and development of destinations**.

Tourism remains a **state subject**. The central tourism department is making efforts to move it to the Concurrent List. The idea of a **National Tourism Board** is under consideration by the government.

Prime Minister Modi has a vision to develop **50 destinations** across the country.

What is the way forward for the growth of the tourism industry in India?

There is a need for **collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities** in developing and promoting tourism. It stimulates **creativity, enhances competitiveness**.

Technology adoption will help in the growth of tourism. Travel experiences are becoming more **personalised, immersive, and interactive**.

AR/VR can help travelers explore destinations before they even arrive. It can provide **virtual tours and simulations** of famous landmarks, historical sites, and cultural experiences. **AI-powered chatbots and digital assistants** can help travelers plan their trips, recommend personalized activities, and offer **real-time assistance while traveling**.

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A **coordinated approach** boosted by the adoption of technology resolves the issue of low spending by foreign tourists in India. On average, foreign tourists spend 33% less than they would in the US.

The tourism sector requires a **comprehensive strategy** that addresses the **six key pillars of planning, place, people, policy, process, and promotion**.

Granting tourism **infrastructure status** will provide further impetus to the growth of the sector.

12. [The days after Women's Day: Integrate women cops as leaders in the police force](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The days after Women's Day: Integrate women cops as leaders in the police force**” published in **The Indian Express** on **10th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population. GS1- Social empowerment

News– Gender empowerment has been a popular theme in India and some tangible policy decisions have indeed been made. Increasing representation of women in uniform services is one such initiative.

What are the issues faced by women in uniform?

Crime against women is very high with an **abysmal rate of conviction**. Public spaces are still unsafe, especially after dark. It curtails their **free movement**. Thus, it adversely affects their working hours and **employment avenues**.

In most states, there is absence of **in-service training after their induction**. Female police officers are expected to investigate crimes against women and cases under POCSO Act. But, in many states, they have not received any **specialised training** for the same.

A study at the **Centre for Police Research** during 2015-16 showed that the number of women is increasing in Maharashtra Police. But women officers do not receive the required cooperation from male colleagues.

Another area of concern is the **hostility faced by women police officers** during **pregnancy and post their maternity leave**.

What is the way forward to improve the situation of women in uniform services?

Policy alone is not sufficient to strengthen the position of women in uniform. There has to be **commitment from the field-level leadership too**.

Coaching in communication skills and fruitful negotiations during public disorder is needed. It can help them deal with the different types of conflicts they face.

Women officers can work on their **time management skills, financial literacy and networking** to attend to **diverse professional and personal responsibilities**.

Local law colleges and universities can be approached to understand the **latest amendments and provisions of law**.

It is important to **sensitise men** on women in police stations and the need to respect them as professional colleagues instead of resenting their presence.

The concept **All Women Police Stations** needs relook. There is a need for **inclusive police stations** where complainants, irrespective of gender, will get **prompt redressal** of their grievances.

A **standard police station** must reflect the **healthy gender ratio of society**. Its main objectives are **prevention and detection of crime and maintenance of public order**.

The idea that women police can do justice to the issues of women needs to be discarded now. Women have proved competent to deal with **complex issues** while men have proved to be **compassionate and empathetic** to women victims.

Confining them to All Women Police Stations or investigating offenses against women and children is a gross **under-utilisation of their wide-ranging capabilities**. It is also unjust for **women victims** who are made to travel long distances in search of AWPSs.

Menstruation and child-bearing stages in a woman's career should also be accepted naturally without casting aspersions on their capabilities. This **requires sensitivity**. The department should **construct rest rooms, changing rooms and creches for them**.

13. [Stopping the boats: On the U.K.'s new 'Illegal Migration Law'](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Stopping the boats: On the U.K.'s new 'Illegal Migration Law'"** published in **The Hindu** on **10th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About UK's new 'Illegal Migration Law'.

News: Recently, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has severely criticised the U.K. Prime Minister's plan to pass a new "Illegal Migration Law". This is because the planned law effectively stops the granting of asylum to migrants who reach the U.K. illegally.

What is the reason behind UK's new 'Illegal Migration Law'?

The UK government is worried that many number of persons are attempting to travel to the U.K. and trying to apply for asylum while on British soil. This according to the UK government is costing significant cost to the exchequer.

Hence, the new law aims to return illegal asylum seekers to either return to their own country or to a "third country" which will enter an agreement with the UK. For instance, Rwanda has entered into an agreement to provide processing facilities for illegal migrants.

Illegal immigrants will also face a lifetime ban on citizenship and re-entry to the U.K.

Exceptions: The Bill makes exceptions for those arriving directly from the countries they are fleeing. But such people will be a small proportion given the short distances "small boats" could travel.

Read more: [Study explains migration events that brought genetic diversity among Nepalese population](#)

What are the challenges in implementing the UK's new 'Illegal Migration Law'?

According to the UNHCR, **a)** the law would contravene international laws, including the 1951 Refugee Convention that Britain is a signatory, **b)** Those who flee their homes and countries often do so without proper paperwork, as they are forced to leave to save their lives. So, there are problems in identifying their source countries, **c)** An estimated 45,000 came to the U.K. on "small boats" last year. They would have been economic refugees rather than political asylum seekers. But, the British government does not make a distinction between the two, **d)** The Bill is like the U.S administration that latched on to the equally catchy "Build That Wall" slogan, **e)** The plan to transport asylum seekers to a third country highlights neo-colonialism and will involve considerable cost which migrants are unlikely to be able to afford,

What the western countries should focus on while enacting Illegal Migration Laws?

Introspect their message: Western countries have long quoted international law and convention to India on its plan to forcibly deport Rohingya refugees to Myanmar, or to discriminate on the basis of religion in the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. Hence, they must introspect on their message to the world by enacting such laws themselves.

Does not belittle the real contributions of immigrants: Western countries should value the significant contributions made by immigrants to western societies. Including those like the parents of UK's present PM and UK's Home Secretary, who made their journey from Africa.

14. [India and Sweden: Old friends in new times](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India and Sweden: Old friends in new times**” published in **The Indian Express** on 11th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: India-Sweden bilateral relations

News: There have been 75 years to bilateral relation between India and Sweden. The article discusses the bilateral relations between the two nations.

How has been the bilateral relations between India and Sweden?

Manufacturing: Sweden and India have both identified industry and manufacturing as the key to building long-term economic growth. The extensive bilateral manufacturing exchange between Sweden and India has allowed the two countries to benefit from each other.

Swedish companies like Ericsson, SKF, Alfa Laval, and Volvo have been ambassadors of Sweden in India for innovation, sustainable manufacturing, skill development, and social inclusion.

Clean Energy: There have been many Swedish innovations in India to enable decarbonisation. There is further need to work toward socially and environmentally sustainable practices throughout the entire supply chain.

Further, **Bilaterally, both the nations** prioritise digitalisation, the green transition, and the industry of the future.

Multilaterally, both nations **co-chairs the Leadership Group for Industry Transition** and also through their **respective presidencies in the European Union and the G20**, they lead the way towards achieving sustainable goals.

Trade: The year 2022 saw record bilateral trade between the two nations.

What lies ahead for the bilateral relations between India and Sweden?

Sweden is one of the strongest proponents for a **Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and India**. An FTA would be a game changer for both the economies.

Further, **Sweden is also committed towards deepening and expanding the partnership by** capitalising on the collaboration in innovation, green transition, energy, health, industry policy and more.

Hence, both nations should work together on improving ties and collaborating on strategic issues and leading the development.

15. [Nobody loves local government](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Nobody loves local government**”, published in the Indian Express on 11th March, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – Indian Polity – Devolution of power upto the local levels

Context: on the 30th anniversary celebrations of 73rd and 74th amendments, there is a need to take a relook on the achievements of local governance.

Centralisation was made attractive by the argument that centralised power would be required to break the power of local elite.

However, even after 73rd and 74th Amendments, both central and state governments, are looking to hoard most of the resources.

India has the lowest spending on local government as a proportion of resources.

In this regard, it becomes important to look at the significance and challenges associated with local governance.

Achievement of 73rd and 74th amendments

It made common citizens, representatives sharing power with central and state governments.

It led to the devolution of many important functions to the local government.

Women empowerment.

What are the challenges facing local governance?

It is a common perception that the lower tiers of government is incompetent. However, the state at local levels is competent, which is facing a lack of support and investment from the top.

A good amount of Fiscal resources that local governments is managing, going through central level schemes, like NREGA.

Technology has been a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can create local capacity; on the other, it has been used to largely bypass political negotiation and control.

What steps should be taken?

Local government requires many technical, administrative and financial fixes.

Jayalalithaa, the former chief minister, made the case for a unified district-level local government rather than a distinction between urban and rural. Now, many important decisions for urbanisation, like land use change are being made in panchayats.

Decentralisation was designed to be the pathways to inclusive growth through inclusive governance and active citizenship. Therefore, the state would be better served by decentralisation than centralisation, transparency instead of opacity (hence the RTI Act), public reason instead of administrative discretion (hence independent regulators), local capacity instead of concentrated authority, active participation instead of subject status.

16. India-US economic partnership needs more energy

Source: The post is based on the article “India-US economic partnership needs more energy” published in **Business Standard** on 13th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 –International Relations

Relevance: India-US bilateral relations

News: India-US Commercial Dialogue was held recently in which Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal met his US counterpart. The discussions were held on various issues.

What were discussions made in the India-US Commercial Dialogue?

Mid-year review: Both sides agreed for a mid-year review of outstanding issues by their officials.

Supply-chain resilience: They both agreed to cooperate in supply-chain resilience by decoupling from China-centred production networks.

The other areas on which discussions made were –iCET, **green and digital economies** and IPEF.

However, problems like tax policy in India and end-use restriction along with other restrictions in the US were not discussed at the commercial dialogue.

The India-US Commercial Dialogue show that both nations are moving towards a strong partnership. However, concerns still remain.

What are the concerns with the bilateral trade between India and the US?

The attitudes in both countries on trade have reversed in the past decade.

For example, the Indian government is focusing on signing FTAs while the US has closed itself off from further trade negotiations and continues to hold the World Trade Organization and the multilateral system.

Furthermore, there have been **no discussions on market access** which the US provides for its partners.

US companies are also not as interested in the sectors like job-intensive, industrial, or infrastructure-related, that are of most interest to the Indian side.

Even in the case of iCET, the question remains whether the iCET can be leveraged in such a way that both countries benefit from integrating their hi-tech sectors.

However, despite these concerns, the US plays an important role in improving India's economy. Therefore, **regular discussions at policy level should be held**. This will help in taking economic relations forward.

17. [In politics and bureaucracy, women are severely under-represented](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “In politics and bureaucracy, women are severely under-represented” published in “The Indian Express” on 13th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Social empowerment. GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance- Issues related to women empowerment

News- Despite economic growth, women’s participation in India’s economy, polity and society has not grown much.

What are statistics related to representation of women in the legislature?

As per data by the **Inter-Parliamentary Union** women make up **14.44% of the Lok Sabha** in India. As per the latest report of the ECI, women represent **10.5% of all Members of Parliament** as of October 2021.

For all the state assemblies, **female MLAs’ representation** stands at an **average of 9%**. India’s ranking in this regard has fallen over the last few years.

It is currently behind Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The data for May 2022 showed that women’s representation in **Pakistan was 20%, in Bangladesh 21%, and in Nepal was 34%**. Since Independence, women’s representation in Lok Sabha has **not even increased by 10%**

What is the status of women in bureaucracy in India?

The representation of Indian women in bureaucracy is also lacking. as per Indian Administrative Services data and the central government’s employment census of 2011, **less than 11% of its total employees** were women. In 2020, this **reached 13%**.

In fact, out of a total of **11,569 IAS officers** entering service between 1951 and 2020, **only 1,527** were women. Further, **only 14% of Secretaries** in the IAS were women in 2022. There are only three women chief secretaries across Indian states and union territories.

India has **never had a woman cabinet secretary**. There have been no women Secretaries of Home, Finance, Defence and Personnel, either.

As per UPSC, in 2019, 1,77,611 women appeared for the UPSC examination, and 1,534 women qualified. In comparison, 3,90,671 male candidates appeared for the exam and 10,311 qualified. Women candidates are more likely to seek **voluntary retirement** from service, compared to men.

Structural impediments to women’s empowerment make it difficult for them to be a part of the services.

Service conditions involving postings in distant cadres, **patriarchal society and balancing family commitments** along with the requirements of this job are **social factors** responsible for women opting out of the civil services.

Furthermore, there is a general perception that women should be preferred for **“soft” ministries** like Social Welfare, Culture, Women and Child Development.

What is the economic status of women in India?

Only 20.37% of MSME owners are women. **10% of start-ups** are founded by females. **23.3% of women** are in the labour force.

Further, the measurement of the **female labour force** is difficult. Most of the available statistics on India’s female labour rate do not include the **unpaid work done by females**.

18. [Reimagining the urban- – rural dichotomy](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Reimagining the urban-rural dichotomy” published in “The Hindu” on 13th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Urbanisation and remedies. GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance- Changing from of urbanisation

News- The rural urban continuum or urban rural continuum has drawn wide attention in recent years.

What is the urban-rural continuum?

It is an **intermediate settlement formation** that lies between rural and urban areas. Here, rural and urban functions **coexist without distinguishable boundaries**.

Such formations evolve due to **interactions of a complex set of geographical, cultural, economic and historical processes**.

What is the status of urban-rural continuum in India?

Kerala is well known for the rural--urban continuum in the coastal plain. **Geographical factors and affirmative public policy** promoting **distributive justice and decentralisation** have increased **rural--urban linkages**.

In recent years, the rural--urban continuum has developed in various parts of the country. The **urban industrial interaction fields** in India are spreading by linking rural areas and small towns around megacities and urban corridors.

What are the reasons behind the phenomena of urban-rural continuum?

In 30 years, **technology and economic globalisation** have increased the **mobility of resources and people and enhanced inter-and intra-country connectivity**.

The extension of transport and communication systems, improved access to energy, increased affordability of private and public transport and penetration of economic networks into remote areas promote a rural--urban continuum.

Rural hinterlands are connected to multiple urban centres. The **movement of goods, people, information and finance** between sites of production and consumption has strengthened **linkages between production and labour markets**.

What are impacts associated with urban-rural continuum?

As the **pull factors** grow, **push factors** driving populations out from both rural areas and urban areas are also intensifying.

In the process, a **mixed economy zone of primary, secondary and tertiary sectors** has evolved.

The rural--urban continuum areas also witness **changing ecosystems**. **Agriculturally productive lands** are being given for other uses. **Food security zones** are being reconfigured. Areas for pollutant filtering are declining. There is an **increase in waste dump, enhanced disaster risk, and elevated vulnerability**.

The access of local people to water, food, fuel, fodder and fibre from ecosystems is reducing. **Intermediary market institutions** are emerging to provide these goods. It has significant implications for the local people.

There is also **an escalation of the market value of land**. It further marginalizes them.

Why is it important to recognize urban-rural continuum?

Social, economic development and environmental issues cannot be addressed without acknowledging the rural--urban continuum.

Acknowledging the rural--urban continuum will help **identify challenges** for improving both urban and rural governance and opportunities for enhanced access to employment, services, institutional resources and environmental management.

A **2021 World Bank Policy Research Working Paper** advocated adopting the notion of urban catchment areas delineated along an urban rural continuum.

Identification of such areas would help understand urban rural interconnections. It is important for making policy decisions across development sectors and for addressing issues related to environment and natural resources management.

A **2008 report of the Study Team on rural-urban continuum** was based on studies in eight countries around the world including India.

It emphasised understanding the **changing relationship between ecosystems and livelihoods** under **diversified economic systems** across the rural-urban continuum.

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What is the way forward to ensure the proper growth of the urban-rural continuum?

The **institutional connections** between rural and urban areas operate at different levels for various development sectors.

The key challenge of decision making is to build **rural-urban partnership**. To achieve this, a **systems approach** is recommended. Here, the city and the surroundings form a **city region**.

A **perspective plan** is prepared for this city region by integrating rural and urban plans within a common frame.

It is important that the rural urban linkages are **better mapped**. **Satellite based settlement data and its integration with Census data** may be useful for it.

19. [Safe harbour at risk: On the impact of the proposed Digital India Act, 2023](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Safe harbour at risk: On the impact of the proposed Digital India Act, 2023**”, published in **The Hindu** on **13th March 2023**.

Syllabus Topic – GS paper 2 – Government policies and interventions for development in various sector

News: The proposed Digital India Act, 2023 is set to become the replacement of the obsolete IT Act, 2000.

Removal of the protection to digital intermediaries in the form of **safe harbour clause**, is one of the debates that is ongoing.

What steps are taken earlier to remove protection for intermediaries?

The government has increased the compliance burden on Internet intermediaries by IT Rules 2021 and its later amendments.

[IT rules 2021](#) placed obligations on SMIs to ensure an open, safe and trusted internet. It provided users of social media and OTT platforms with a mechanism for redressal and timely resolution of their grievance. For this matter a Grievance Redressal Officer (GRO) to be appointed, who should be a resident in India. Appeals were filed against the rules.

In Oct 2022 amendment to IT rules 2021 provided for government-appointed committees. It will adjudicate on an individual user's appeals against moderation decisions of these intermediaries.

In January 2023, the IT Ministry proposed an amendment on the take down of social media/news content that has been marked as “fake” or “false” by the Press Information Bureau or any other government agency.

What are the concerns associated with digital India Act?

Requirements on intermediaries may become needlessly difficult and punitive.

Safe harbour provisions, in particular Section 230 of the U.S. Communications Decency Act, 1996, has helped in development of internet. It should be taken into consideration. Section 230 of the U.S. Communications Decency Act, 1996, that explicitly provided immunity to online services with respect to user-generated content.

20. [The China hand in Saudi-Iran diplomacy](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “The China hand in Saudi-Iran diplomacy”, published in Indian Express on 13th March 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

News: Recently, the Saudi Arabia and Iran entered a deal, which was brokered by China.

Both countries re-established their relations, seven years after breaking off ties.

Under this deal, Iran and Saudi Arabia will reopen their embassies, revive a 2001 security pact, and a 1998 agreement to build economic, commercial, scientific, cultural and sports ties. China is also a signatory to the deal.

Why both countries have tilted towards China?

Saudi Arabia: In 2019, Houthi rebels, backed by Iran, made the drone attacks on its oil facilities in 2019. However, US led by Trump declined to help Saudis. Similarly, Biden administration also signalled decreasing interest in the region.

Iran: Trump pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal and reimposed sanctions on Iran. Furthermore, US carried out the targeted killing of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard chief Qassem Soleimani.

Significance and implications of this deal

First, this agreement may resolve the ongoing conflicts between 2 countries in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon.

Second, it establishes China's dominance in the region, which was a US turf, until now.

Third, it may rebuild the China's image as an international peacebuilder, from the earlier image of a territorial aggressor and a loan shark.

Fourth, China has been trying to improve relations with both countries for a long time. In 2021, it signed a strategic cooperation pact with Iran. It has been in contact with crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman, when US was reluctant to maintain its relationship.

What are its implications for India?

First, it makes China, an important geopolitical player in the Persian Gulf, where India has been continuously strengthening its ties.

Second, India has also been strengthening its relations with US. Now with US weakening in the region, it won't be able to help India.

Third, [I2U2 \(Israel-India-UAE-US\)](#) or "quad of the middle east" may render dysfunctional with the isolation of UAE and Israel.

21. [Adultery as misconduct and judicial musings](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "Adultery as misconduct and judicial musings" published in "The Hindu" on 13th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian Constitution- Fundamental Rights

Relevance- Issues related to fundamental rights in India

News- Recently, the Union government sought clarification from the Court saying that any adulterous acts should be governed by the relevant sections of the **Army Act, the Air Force Act and the Navy Act**. They are **special legislations by virtue of Article 33 of the Constitution**.

What are the provisions of Article 33?

Parliament has powers to restrict or **abrogate the fundamental rights** of certain categories of persons, including members of the armed forces to ensure the proper discharge of their duties and the maintenance of discipline among them.

What was the stand of SC on the clarifications sought by the government?

The Court said that it was not concerned with the **effect and operation of the relevant provisions** of special acts of armed forces.

Court did not approve of adultery. It found adultery as a **moral and civil wrong and a ground for securing dissolution of marriage**.

What is the stand of SC on adultery?

The Supreme Court of India decriminalised adultery in **Joseph Shine versus Union of India**. It held **Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code along with Section 198 of the Criminal Procedure Code** to be unconstitutional. These provisions were violative of **Articles 14, 15 and 21** of the Constitution of India.

What are various judgments related to adultery by government employees?

The Rajasthan High Court, in **Mahesh Chand Sharma versus State of Rajasthan and Others (2019)** set aside the departmental proceedings against the inspector in the Rajasthan Police. He had illicit relations with one woman constable.

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The High Court held that no employer can be allowed to do moral policing on its employee's personal choices and selections cannot be a subject matter of departmental proceedings under the Service Conduct Rules.

Gujarat High Court in **Maheshbhai Bhurjibhai Damor versus State of Gujarat and 3 others case of 2022**, set aside the dismissal order of an armed police constable. There were allegations that he had developed illicit relations with a widow, and it amounted to **misconduct**.

The Court held that in order to **prove misconduct**, allegations must have some **correlation with the duties** to be performed by the government servant.

What is the way forward to deal with the issue of adultery by personnel of the armed forces?

An example may be drawn with the conduct of army personnel who consumes alcohol. Unless the drinking habits affect the **discharge of his duties or discipline of the force**, no departmental action is initiated.

Article 33 of the Constitution empowers Parliament to restrict the fundamental rights of the members of the armed forces. But there is a caveat. This can be used to ensure the **proper discharge of their duties and the maintenance of discipline** among them.

The same principle will also apply to members of the forces charged with the **maintenance of public order**, i.e., the police personnel of all States and Union Territories

It can be inferred in all relevant judgments related to adultery that if the conduct **interferes with the honest discharge of duties**; then it may be considered **unbecoming of a government servant**. The **legislative intent of Article 33** of the Constitution is also similar.

Therefore, the **right to privacy** available to the members of the armed forces cannot be taken away under the guise of special legislation. It should have some **correlation with their duties**.

22. [Our e-courts project needs a big rehaul to assure us transparency](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Our e-courts project needs a big rehaul to assure us transparency**” published in **Mint on 14th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Polity

Relevance: concerns with e-court project

News: The Union budget for 2022-23 allocated ₹7,000 crore for the third phase of the e-courts project. The project is administered by the e-committee of India's Supreme Court in partnership with the ministry of law and justice.

About the E-court Project and E-committee

[Click Here to Read](#)

The project has helped with easier availability of judgments and case progression updates online on the e-courts website. However, the achievements are not significant when compared to problems being faced by the project.

What are the concerns with the project?

Delay in Investments: A parliamentary standing committee in December 2022 acknowledged that no money was spent on the project in 2022-23. It was due to a failure in getting necessary approvals by the department of justice and the e-committee.

Functioning of the e-committee: There is a lack of transparency in the functioning of the e-committee of the Supreme Court because it does not release any minutes of its meetings. It is also not clear how the e-committee selects various outsiders for its expert panels.

Audit: Neither the e-committee nor the e-courts project has ever been audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. Even the parliamentary panels have not reviewed the performance of the project.

Lack of transparency: An attempt was made by the author to get the information of the final proposal for the project's Phase III through RTI. However, the Public Information Officer of the

Supreme Court refused to share the proposal. The reason given was that the final proposal is still under consideration of the government.

It raises questions on the logic on which the ₹7,000 crore outlay provided by the government.

Centralization of the project: The Supreme Court has ruled that **high courts are in charge of the administration of the district judiciary in Indian states**. However, when it comes to the e-courts project, the e-committee implemented Phase I centrally.

In the **second phase**, the high courts were put in charge of procurement and implementation, but the e-committee was still responsible for planning and setting standards.

Even though the SC has attempted to democratize the committee's composition by staffing it with high court judges, it still functions in the centralized manner.

What can be done going ahead?

Decentralization: Decentralization can improve the efficiency of the e-courts project. It can facilitate a greater technological integration with the e-systems of state governments. It will also encourage competition between states to modernize their own judiciary.

New Structure: The Government by law can also create a new legal structure for India's e-courts project.

23. [Understanding the Saudi-Iran detente](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Understanding the Saudi-Iran detente**" published in **The Hindu** on **14th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 –International Relations

Relevance: **Agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran**

News: **Saudi** Arabia and Iran, two of West Asia's major powers, have agreed to restore diplomatic relations in an agreement brokered by China.

What were the reasons behind the breakdown in relation between Saudi Arabia and Iran?

The reasons were – regional dominance, Iran turning into Shia theocratic republic, ideological differences, etc.

Further, their relations collapsed in 2016 after the Saudi embassy in Tehran was overrun by protesters following Riyadh's execution of a revered Shia cleric.

However, under China's mediation, they have agreed to start a new beginning.

What are the terms of the agreement?

Read – [The China hand in Saudi-Iran diplomacy](#)

According to reports, **Iran has agreed to prevent further attacks** against Saudi Arabia, especially those from the Houthi-controlled parts of Yemen.

Saudi Arabia has agreed to regulate *Iran International*, a Farsi news channel that is critical of the Iranian regime.

China is also planning to host a cross-Gulf conference of Iran and the six Gulf monarchies (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman), who make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), this year to further strengthen peace in the region.

Why did Saudi Arabia reach out to Iran?

U.S.'s deprioritisation policy for West Asia.

The US now faces greater foreign policy challenges such as the Russian war in Ukraine and China's rise in the Indo-Pacific. Hence, this has created a **power vacuum in the West Asian region to counter Iran**.

Therefore, to address the vacuum created, the US and its allies wanted to bring Israel and the Arab world together against Iran.

Further, **relations between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. have not been good in the recent years**. The U.S. is now one of the top oil producers in the world and is not as dependent on the Gulf as during the Cold War.

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Hence, Saudis decided to look for alternative solutions for the Iran problem. i.e., they came up with a way to reach out to the Iranians.

What led Iran to accept the deal?

Iran is facing one of **the toughest phases of economic isolation and domestic pressure**. Its economy is deteriorating, and its currency (the rial) is struggling.

Looking at the condition of Iran, China allowed Iran to withdraw parts of the \$20 billion funds that were frozen with Chinese banks after the U.S. sanctions.

Hence, Iran thought in such a struggling **economic scenario**, it would be better to have a deal with Saudi Arabia, under China's mediation.

Strategically, Iran also knows that such a deal could complicate American efforts to unite Arab countries and Israel against it.

What does China gain from the deal?

China has economic, regional and strategic interests in playing the role of a peace broker in West Asia. China is the world's largest oil buyer and stability in the energy market is essential for its continued rise.

Further, China's ties with Saudi Arabia and Iran are good unlike the US. **China is a leading buyer of Saudi oil and the largest trading partner of Iran.**

Therefore, this agreement marks China's arrival as a major power in West Asia.

Therefore, presence of China and absence of US in the Saudi-Iran reconciliation points to larger changes in the global order.

However, there are also risks associated with the deal because West Asian region is prone to conflicts. If the agreement between the Saudi-Iran doesn't work, it could lead to a bad impression of China globally.

How does the U.S. look at the deal?

U.S. officials have welcomed the reconciliation because peace it would help to stabilise the region and benefit the global energy market.

However, there are also **strategic concerns with because the US** sees an ally (Saudi Arabia) making friends with its rival (Iran) and its global challenger (China) deepening its influence in a region which the U.S. had dominated since the Suez War of 1956.

There has been a presence of the US in major peace initiatives in the region in the post-War world. **For example**, Middle East Quartet (2002) or the Abraham Accords (2020).

24. [A chance for India to shape a data governance regime](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "A chance for India to shape a data governance regime" published in "The Hindu" on 14th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- e-governance. GS3- Awareness in field of IT and computers

Relevance- Issues related to big data

News- India has made good progress in its digital strategies and data governance. However, it must also ensure that its digital strategies and data governance are inclusive, transparent, and secure.

What are some facts associated with India's [Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture \(DEPA\)](#)?

It is a **consent management tool**. It has benefits associated with it like it has the potential to improve **data protection and privacy** for citizens by giving them **greater control over the use and sharing** of their personal information. It could help to build **trust in digital technologies and data governance**.

However, there are also risks related to **security and privacy**. If this tool is not properly implemented, there is a risk that personal information could be misused or misappropriated.

The implementation of DEPA **may be inconsistent** across different sectors and jurisdictions. It could undermine its **effectiveness and create confusion** among citizens.

What are concerns related to use of data?

There are concerns related to **connectivity and the availability** of a skilled human workforce are other concerns.

Potential misuse of data and information in these sectors. For example, in the health sector, there is a risk that sensitive medical information could be misused or exploited for commercial purposes,

Ownership and governance of data generated and collected in health and agriculture. There are questions related to **the rights of data providers and responsibilities** towards them.

Data sovereignty has become an increasingly important issue. The term refers to the principle that a country has the right to control the collection, storage, and use of data within its borders.

What are the benefits associated with establishment of an India Data Management Office (IDMO)?

It is a step forward in the country's journey towards **data sharing and data governance**.

The IDMO is expected to **oversee and coordinate** the implementation of India's **digital strategies and data governance framework**. It will ensure that these efforts are aligned with the **country's values and priorities**.

It will also work to promote the development and implementation of **open-source solutions**.

It will help to ensure that underlying data architectures are a **social public good**, and digital technologies become **accessible and affordable** for all.

What is the way forward for data governance in India?

Open source and open innovation models can be important alternatives to **proprietary solutions** that are governed by big tech companies.

It requires a **close collaboration** between the government, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders and the development of **clear and effective regulations and standards**.

Many commentators have called for the **opening of data "silos"** to capture the potential wealth of data sharing between governmental offices, corporations and citizens.

While it may be useful in promoting **citizen participation and increasing access to information**, it may jeopardise **trust and security**. For example, the sharing of **sensitive personal or financial information** may be harmful to individuals and society as a whole.

Therefore, it is important for India to come to a **middle ground between restrictive data sovereignty and limitless data flow**. There is a need to define which data, for which purposes, can be shared and used by whom.

In doing so, India must **respect and protect the fundamental right to privacy** with a **robust data protection law**. It must **balance the interests of all stakeholders**, including governments, businesses, and citizens for the goal of sustainable development.

There is a need for investment in the necessary **digital infrastructure and skills** to ensure that data is collected, stored, and used in a **responsible, secure and accountable manner**.

Further, it is essential that the India Stack is designed and implemented in a way that is **consistent with India's broader development strategies**. This will help to ensure that the data governance is aligned with the **country's values and priorities**.

25. [A reality check for foreign universities](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "A reality check for foreign universities" published in "The Hindu" on 14th March 2023.

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

Relevance- Higher education

News- The government has proposed to invite foreign universities to set up their campuses in India.

What are the government's assumptions behind this move?

The number of Indian students going abroad increased from 4.4 lakh in 2021 to 7.5 lakh in 2022. The **outward remittance** spent on education in 2012--2022 was about \$5.1 billion. India is an unprofitable market even if foreign universities can attract a fraction of this outward flow.

Second supporting factor is the **enrollment figures**. The **All- India Survey on Higher Education estimates** that 4.13 crore students are enrolled in higher education.

If the policy target is to achieve a **50% enrolment ratio by 2035** from the current 27.3%, the intake of students will almost double in 15 years. Much of this is expected to happen in private institutions.

What are the challenges in front of foreign universities for setting up in India?

The **OECD's global study on the internationalisation of higher education** pointed out that **financial aspects** of setting up an offshore campus are likely to prevail despite **good intentions**.

First, how foreign universities will **position themselves in terms of fees and cost**.

If foreign universities want to compete with premier Indian institutes such as the IITs, they will have to compete in terms of cost as well.

For instance, IIT Madras has about 7,000 students with an annual operating expenditure of ₹1,032 crore in 2020--21. The fees only partially meet this expense. Government support enables the institution to charge low fees.

Second, as per the **key conditions of the UGC**, they have to **offer services on par with what they offer at home**. In that case, they must bring in **foreign faculty and invest significant capital**. Then fees would be very high.

Third, creating graduates who will be in demand is not easy, even after charging a high fee. Even decades old elite private institutes are yet to reach IIT or IIM levels.

Fourth, Students travelling abroad pay more fees for better opportunities and enriching cultural experiences. Realising this, countries such as the UAE, offer 10 -year visas for exceptional students and five year visas for others to seek work. This makes it **attractive for students**.

What are options for foreign universities to open their branches in India?

First, the **local market is fragmented**. Some universities such as Shiv Nadar and Azim Premji, backed by philanthropic institutions have managed to keep the **annual tuition fees low**. Whereas Institutes such as the VIT take the **volume route and charge a mid-level fee**. Others such as Ashoka University or Krea University charge a **relatively high fee**.

In this landscape, foreign universities could position themselves as premier institutions and compete with elite private institutes.

Second, Higher fees need not be a major barrier if institutes can provide **premium placements for students**. Recruiters should be willing to pay **enhanced entry level remuneration**, which may **offset higher education costs**.

The IITs and IIMs offer two different models. The IIT success mantra is **low fees and a high Premium**. The IIM model has **high fees, high premium model**.

The **2019 Global Education Monitoring Report on the internationalisation of higher education in Gulf Cooperation Council countries** too points it out. It says that despite GCC nations heavily investing in branch campuses of foreign universities, the employment workforce nationalisation has not been as expected.

26. [Find Covid Origin – China must be held accountable. Also ban dangerous gain of function research on viruses](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Find Covid Origin – China must be held accountable. Also ban dangerous gain of function research on viruses**” published in **The Times of India** on **14th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About speculations on covid origin.

News: Recently, the WHO chief said that tracing the origins of Covid is not just a scientific but also a moral imperative.

Why there are still many debates on Covid origin?

The lab leak theory has persisted despite some scientists positing that the novel virus had naturally jumped from animals to humans. The unknowability is there because China is stonewalling any Covid-origin investigation.

How China is stonewalling Covid origin investigations?

In early 2021, China allowed a WHO team to visit the country. But the visiting team was neither allowed to freely travel and interview witnesses nor given access to raw patient data from early cases in Wuhan – the Chinese city thought to be ground zero of the pandemic.

When WHO proposed a second phase of investigation later that year, China flatly refused.

China's refusal fuelled the speculated lab leak theory that the Wuhan Institute of Virology is conducting gain-of-function research on coronaviruses and the US also funding the project.

Read more: [Lab leak theory of Coronavirus needs credible investigation](#)

What should be done?

There must be an international consensus on banning all gain of function research. This is because **a)** The dangers of such experiments far outweigh the benefits, **b)** The modified viruses are essentially deadly bioweapons.

Further, the investigations into the origins of Covid must continue – to find the truth and to better prepare for or prevent future outbreaks.

27. [How India's new naval base at Andamans will force Beijing to reassess its strategy](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “How India's new naval base at Andamans will force Beijing to reassess its strategy” published in “The Indian Express” on 14th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations – India and its Neighborhood

Relevance- India defence preparedness for achieving foreign policy objectives.

News- The government of India has begun to build a holistic naval base on Great Nicobar Island, which overlooks the entrance to the Malacca Straits. It is hardly 90 miles from the tip of Indonesia.

What is the rationale behind building a naval base on Great Nicobar Island?

A naval base in Great Nicobar can be the **central piece to an oceanic strategy against Chinese aggression** in the Himalayas.

Over **65 per cent of China's oil dependency is fulfilled through Indian Ocean lines of communications** imports. With increasing vulnerability of oil imports, China will be **more cautious on LAC**.

The tactical scenario in the Malacca Straits and South China Sea is already in favor of India due to the **intelligence sharing and communications agreements of the Quad**. In times of crisis, these agreements would be activated.

By using these agreements, Chinese aggression on the northern LAC would be countered by a threat to China-bound tankers in the Malacca Straits.

It will act as a **deterrence to China**. China will begin to treat India as an equal force.

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The prerequisites to victory are **information dominance and the denial of information to the enemy**. With a base in Great Nicobar, the entry to the Malacca Straits would be a hundred miles away while the nearest Chinese base in Sanya would be 1,500 miles away.

Which factors will decide that naval base is used for strengthening the defence preparedness of India?

It depends on whether India is prepared to use it for **strategic purposes**. Whether it permits the new base in Great Nicobar to be the beginning of an **oceanic strategy to replace the land-centric approach**.

It also depends on whether the **political intention** is merely to set up a **minor reconnaissance** base in Great Nicobar or build an Indian outpost for **eastern theatre command**.

What does this move by India to build a naval base imply?

The **strategic rules governing war** have not changed over the years. Alexander the Great never fought on the grounds not favoring him, nor did Napoleon and the great captains of war.

At sea, choosing the area to fight means creating a **dominant battlespace** where our **information dominance prevails** and the enemy is blinded.

The Ukraine war has once again demonstrated it. In Ukraine, the local satellite information is made available right down to the platoon commanders' level, on the cell phone via US satellite internet.

India needs to **avoid the two-front war scenario, downsizing the army and counter-punching the Chinese on the seas**. It will deny Beijing a fight on the ground of its own choosing.

28. [India and Italy: Friends in a turbulent world](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India and Italy: Friends in a turbulent world**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **15th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance– India and Italy relationship

News– On the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Italy and India, the summit between the Italian Prime Minister and Indian Prime Minister was held on March 2.

What is the status of India and Italy bilateral relationship?

Economic partnership–Bilateral trade reached **15 billion euros in 2022**. It is double in comparison to 2020.

In 2020, a **five-year action plan** was adopted. It has a well-defined range of priorities: **Energy transition, food processing, advanced manufacturing, the creative industry and infrastructure** of various kinds.

Regional and global cooperation– In recent years, Italy has joined all the multilateral initiatives promoted by India. Some of these are **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Coalition for Disaster Relief Infrastructure (CDRI), and International Solar Alliance**.

Both have a **common vision for an Indo-Pacific based on respect for international law, freedom of navigation and territorial integrity**.

On the **Ukraine issue**, both countries are trying to find a solution to the conflict.

Cultural relations– Both have collaboration in the cultural field, heritage front and the creative industry (fashion, design, cinema) as well.

Science and Technology– Both countries have launched **13 new joint projects** for scientific research and technology.

People- to-people contacts– In the last few years, there has been a significant increase in the flow of Indian students and workers in Italy. The Indian community **exceeds a figure of 2,00,000** in Italy. It is the highest in the European Union

Health sector– During the pandemic, both countries collaborated since the beginning. They have **exchanged experiences and practices, launched humanitarian initiatives, and promoted joint research projects**.

What were major developments during the summit?

The Joint Declaration approved in the Summit affirms the commitment of the two governments to develop a **strategic partnership**. It will also focus on sectors such as **defence, cybersecurity, space and energy**.

A connection was also identified between the **Indo-Pacific and Mediterranean**. India plays a leading role in the Indo-Pacific. Italy is a **front-line player in the enlarged Mediterranean** in terms of energy security, investments and commerce.

The link between the two areas will be strengthened in the fields of **maritime and digital connectivity and security**.

Finally, Italy announced its full support to the **Indian Presidency of the G20**. It will contribute to the issues that were at the centre of Italy's G20 Presidency in 2021. This includes **debt service suspension, special drawing rights, finance and health track, and balance sheet optimisation of multilateral banks**

Prime Minister Meloni and Prime Minister Modi have also expressed their commitment to enhancing the **European-Indian strategic partnership**.

They also supported the ongoing negotiations for **Free Trade Agreements and agreements on investment protection and geographical indication protection**.

29. India and the Anglosphere

Source– The post is based on the article “**India and the Anglosphere**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **15th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Regional and global groupings

News– The road map to Australia's acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines, announced this week in San Diego by the leaders of Australia, the UK, and the US

How do different countries look at AUKUS?

For Canberra, London, and Washington, the AUKUS will promote **deterrence and stability in the Indo-Pacific**.

For China, AUKUS, along with Quad, are **small alliances built by US in Asia to contain it**.

There is a range of opinions among Australia's neighbors. Their individual reactions have been shaped by their perspectives on the **shifting Asian security dynamic**.

What are the challenges for AUKUS?

It will have to overcome several **technical and policy issues** in implementing the AUKUS road map. The current estimated cost of the project will be around \$250 billion. An Australian-built nuclear submarine will enter service after three decades.

Projects of this scale involve **significant delays and cost escalation**. The **current political support** in the three democracies for the AUKUS framework may not endure in the years ahead.

What are several phases in acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines by Australia?

The first step in the implementation of AUKUS involves **deploying Australian personnel** in the American and British nuclear submarine establishments. There will also be **more port calls** by US and British nuclear-powered submarines in Australia.

The second phase will start in 2027. Washington and London will work to deploy nuclear submarines in Australia. The objective is to accelerate the **development of the Australian naval personnel, workforce, infrastructure and regulatory system necessary** to establish solid **SSN capabilities** in Australia.

In the third phase, the US will sell up to **five nuclear-powered submarines** to Australia.

The fourth phase will start in the late 2030s. London will deliver the **first British-built AUKUS submarine** to Canberra.

The final phase will begin by the early 2040s. The nuclear submarines built in Australia will begin to roll out.

What will be the strategic consequences of AUKUS plans for Asia and India?

First, AUKUS will transform **Australia's strategic capabilities**. It will make it a **powerful factor in shaping the Indo-Pacific regional security environment**.

The AUKUS involves **collaboration** between the three countries in a range of **emerging technologies** like artificial intelligence and [quantum computing](#). It will shape **regional security scenarios**.

India tends to underestimate the extraordinary scientific and technical skills in Australia. There will be **dramatic upgradation** of those Australian capabilities in the coming years. This should also open the door for **greater S&T cooperation** between India and Australia.

Second, the Indian foreign policy community tends to neglect the continuing **global strategic salience** of Britain. Its profile in Asia is boosted by the AUKUS deal.

The UK is the **lynchpin in the AUKUS**. It has a critical role in designing and developing a new class of nuclear-powered submarines.

The UK abandoned its **security responsibilities East of Suez** in the late 1960s. After that, it had become marginal to Asian security all these decades. AUKUS will change that by reinforcing London's renewed claim for a **long-term role in Indo-Pacific security**.

Third, AUKUS has reinvigorated the idea of an **"Anglosphere"**. It refers to enduring **geopolitical bonds between the US, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand**. There has been rapid expansion of India's ties with the English-speaking world in recent times.

The **intelligence sharing among the "Five Eyes"** has remained an important feature of their partnership. The AUKUS arrangement is more narrowly focused on the **Indo-Pacific**. It will look beyond **information sharing**. It will promote **integration of the technological and defence industrial bases** of the three countries.

Fourth, the three countries have emphasised that AUKUS's purview does not involve **nuclear weapons**.

China has launched a campaign against the AUKUS. It is said that it is against the **non-proliferation norms**. But the NPT does not prohibit **AUKUS-like cooperation between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states**.

AUKUS countries have made it clear that they will negotiate strictest terms for the **international monitoring** of the **transfer and use of nuclear material** under the AUKUS arrangement.

Finally, the US has made it clear that it does not want the **expansion of the AUKUS** arrangement to other partners like Japan and India. India has no expectation of such cooperation.

India's interest lies in something else. AUKUS marks a significant change in **US regional strategy for the Indo-Pacific**. In the past, the US sought to promote **regional security unilaterally through its own military capabilities**.

Washington is now eager to boost the **strategic capabilities of its allies and partners** in the Indo-Pacific. The US focus is different with different partners. But the objective is to promote **local balances of power**.

India can develop a **unique set of arrangements** with Washington and its allies. It will strengthen India's **comprehensive national power** and enhance its contribution to **regional peace and security**.

30. [A case for electricity public hearings that is the best of both worlds](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A case for electricity public hearings that is the best of both worlds**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **15th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance– Issues related to electricity sector

News– The central Electricity Regulatory Commissions (ERC) recently issued a public notice where it announced that hearings would resume through in-person mode. These were closed due to COVID19.

The ERCs in Tamil Nadu and Telangana have also reverted to in person hearings. However, several State ERCs, including those in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, recently held public hearings entirely online.

What are the benefits associated with in-person public hearings?

These facilitate **meaningful interactions and cross -learning** between various stakeholders. It helps to build **consumer networks and enable collective action**.

Thus, it promotes **consensus building**. It also lends **enhanced credibility** to decisions on complex matters.

It has led to understanding on issues like **under projecting distribution losses by inflating agricultural consumption** and the **need for scrutiny** in power purchase contracts.

A consumer’s concerns with the **quality of supply** also get discussed and **corrective measures** are taken.

What are issues related to in-person public hearings?

There are issues related to **distance, logistics of transport, or lack of financial support**. It could hinder participation in the public hearing.

What are steps taken by states to improve in person public hearings?

Many State ERCs have tried to **increase access and diversify participation**. They have organised **tariff revision public hearings** at different locations.

Steps have been taken in some States such as Andhra Pradesh and Odisha for better engagement. They are making a **local language summary of the tariff petition and providing consumer advocate services** available to the public.

What are the benefits associated with online hearing?

Online hearing resolved **transport and logistics issues**. It enabled wider attendance from remote Locations. It allowed for **quick convening and multiple meetings**.

These ERCs also provide a **live streaming feature**. It has helped in **improving access, visibility and transparency**. Over the last two years, **significant infrastructure and experience** toward online hearings have been built by institutions and individuals.

What are the challenges faced in online hearings?

Technological access and know-ledge are not uniform across the country. It creates difficulties for some to participate.

Issues such as **poor Internet connections, technical mishaps, and the use of complex platforms and applications** by ERCs hinder participation.

What are steps taken by states to improve online hearing?

ERCs have taken measures such as providing **step by step guidelines and orientation sessions** for more participation. In Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, ERCs have set up **facilitation centres** across the States for public participation.

What is the way forward to improve the process of hearings by Electricity Regulatory Commissions?

Public hearing is a **major social platform**. There is a need for **more such interactions and ensuring transparency and accountability** in operations. **Improving access** to these public proceedings should be a priority.

The provision of the online mode in addition to in-person hearings would strengthen **public participation**. This has been recognised by other institutions such as the National Green Tribunal. They provide e-hearing facility in addition to in-person hearing.

Public hearings conducted in **hybrid mode** are best suited to **improving access**. The choice of mode is left to the citizen.

It will plug **access gaps**, **provide flexibility of participation to the citizen**, and **enable a robust avenue for public participation**.

31. [About legalising same-sex marriages: Inaction and intervention: On the handling of social issues](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“Inaction and intervention: On the handling of social issues” published in **The Hindu** on **15th March 2023**.

“Express View on Centre’s affidavit on same-sex marriage” published in the **Indian Express** on **15th March 2023**.

“Three Problems With Gol’s View On Same-Sex Marriage” published in **The Times of India** on **15th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About legalising same-sex marriages.

News: Recently, the Centre has filed an affidavit to Supreme Court mentioning the issues in legalising same-sex marriages. The apex court has now referred the matter to a Constitution Bench of five judges to decide the issue of granting legal recognition to same-sex marriages.

About the case and Centre’s affidavit on same-sex marriages

Must read: [Same-sex marriages can rock societal values: Centre](#)

According to the Centre, to legalise same-sex marriages various laws and provisions have to be amended. This includes religious laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act, Special Marriage Act, Citizenship Act and Foreign Marriage Act.

What are the issues in the centre’s affidavit on legalising same-sex marriages?

a) Centre’s argument that Court never accepted same-sex marriages and only decriminalised their sexual intercourse is a reflection of government’s narrow vision. This is because, the SC itself in Navtej Johar case said that “History owes an apology to the members of this community and their families, for the delay” **b)** People’s belief in marriage’s sacrament nature cannot deny equal status to same-sex marriages, **c)** The Centre’s traditional notion of marriage is **missing the foundation of love, respect and recognition between partners**, which holds the relationship together and builds community around it, **d)** A person’s fundamental rights cannot be debated against reducing government burden of too many amendments, **e)** Ever since the Naz Foundation judgement of Delhi High Court in 2009, people in same-sex relationships are living together as married couples and raising children whether born to either party, or adopted. Now they are just seeking stability and recognition.

What should be done on the question of legalising same-sex marriages?

Ensure equality: Before addressing the question of legalising same-sex marriages, the centre should ensure that no civil rights available to married heterosexual couples ought to be denied to those who belong to the same gender.

The court can determine the time limit: Taiwan is the first Asian country to permit same-sex marriages. The constitutional court of Taiwan directed the government to act within a timeframe to amend its laws. A similar approach can be followed in India as well.

Need for responsive government: It is the work of the Legislature to bring far-reaching changes that may impact the personal laws of all religions. So, instead of arguing that legalising same-

sex marriages should come from judicial intervention or legislative action, the government should frame a law on the subject.

Else, the Legislative inaction on burning social issues will legitimise and invite judicial intervention.

Empower the community: Instead of playing moral police, the State should work on empowering the community with equal opportunities. This is because the changes to societal structures and attitudes take time.

Work with experts for amendments: Most of the amendments are simple, merely require replacing the term 'husband' or 'wife' with the gender-neutral term 'spouse'. However, certain gender-specific terms, such as dowry, domestic violence, maintenance and alimony require closer examination and deliberation with experts and community representatives.

Read more: [Judgements in India regarding the marriage rights of the LGBTQIA+ community](#)

Overall, the centre should understand that decriminalisation does not mean only their right to have sex alone. But it was also about the right to live with dignity and equality as full members of society.

32. On reservation for women in politics

Source: The post is based on the article “On reservation for women in politics” published in **The Hindu** on **16th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 –Governance

Relevance: About Women’s Reservation Bill

News: A protest has emerged in Delhi regarding the Women’s Reservation Bill. The article discusses arguments related to the bill and the history of women’s reservation.

What has been the history of political reservation for women?

During the National Movement: The three women’s bodies sent a letter to the British Prime Minister in 1931 seeking political reservation.

Constituent Assembly: The issue of women’s reservation also came up in Constituent Assembly debates. However, it was rejected on the grounds that a democracy is expected to give representation to all groups.

73rd and 74th amendments: The Committee of the Status of Women in India, 1971 and The National Perspective Plan for Women in 1988 recommended reservation of women in the local bodies.

These recommendations paved the way for the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution which mandate all State governments to reserve one-third of the seats for women in the local bodies.

However, the issue of reservation in the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies still remained and the Women’s Reservation Bill was brought in this regard.

What is the Women’s Reservation Bill?

[Click Here to Read](#)

The current government has promised 33% reservation for women. However, there has been no progress from the government in this regard.

What are the arguments for the Bill?

First, affirmative action is necessary for the improving the condition of women. The bill will help in the condition of women because political parties are patriarchal in nature.

Second, women as panchayat leaders have proved themselves and broken the established myths, questioning women leadership. On the other hand, crime rate against women is on the rise as well. Therefore, reservation will ensure women on decision making positions.

Third, despite the national movement, and passing of more than 7 decades after independence, women are still underrepresented in the Parliament. Only legislation can provide assurance of representation in this situation.

Note: Only about 14% of the members in Indian Parliament are women. India has a fewer percentage of women in the lower House than its neighbours such as Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

What are the arguments against the Bill?

First, reservation for women is **against the idea of equality** enshrined in the Constitution because if reservations are provided, women would not be competing on merit.

Second, women are not the same as a caste group, i.e., they **are not a homogenous community**. Therefore, the same arguments made for caste-based reservation cannot be made for women.

Third, women's interests cannot be isolated from other social, economic and political strata.

Fourth, the reservation of seats in Parliament would restrict the choice of voters to women candidates. Therefore, the reservation should be given to political parties rather than legislative bodies.

Dual member constituencies (where constituencies will have two MPs, one of them being a woman) can also be adopted.

Fifth, men hold primary key positions in politics. Therefore, some argue that bringing women into politics could destroy the ideal family.

33. [peaking Their Mind: Green, Clean And Peaceful](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Speaking Their Mind: Green, Clean And Peaceful**" published in **The Times of India** on **16th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 –Regional and Global Groupings

Relevance: About Youth 20 (Y20) Summit

News: The articles discuss the power of youth and the Youth 20 (Y20) Summit that will be held later this year.

About the Youth 20 (Y20) Summit

India will host the Youth 20 (Y20) Summit later this year on the sidelines of the G20 presidency. The Y20 Summit will host youth from across the world.

The Summit **will provide an opportunity to express global youths' vision**, values and ideas to arrive at solutions that will be shared with G20 leaders.

Five key themes have been chosen for Youth 20 (Y20) Summit –**a)** Future of Work: Industry 4.0, Innovation & 21st Century Skills, **b)** Climate Change & Disaster Risk Reduction, **c)** Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, **d)** Shared Future: Youth in Democracy and Governance, and **e)** Health, Wellbeing and Sports: Agenda for Youth.

What is the significance of Youth 20 (Y20) Summit?

Youths around the world play an important role in bringing changes in science, sports, technology, business, politics, environmental sustainability and innovation. **They provide local solutions to global socio-economic problems.**

India's youth will also bring changes in social, economic, environmental and technological innovation. India's youth lead in all aspects whether it be a social cause or a billion-dollar startups.

Further, **Indian ethos encourages youth to look beyond personal interests** towards global problems such as getting united for a more equitable, sustainable, inclusive, intergenerational, progressive and peaceful world.

Indian youths are the network to drive change and develop new ideas for Amrit Kaal. Youth will play a pivotal role in making India a developed nation by 2047.

Hence, Youth 20 (Y20) Summit will act as a platform for the youths from all over the world to express their visions and solutions towards global problems.

34. [Vibrant Village Programme: A step towards securing Himalayan borders](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Vibrant Village Programme: A step towards securing Himalayan borders” published in “The Indian Express” on 16th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance- Issues related to rural development

News- The article explains the initiatives taken by government for development of border villages

What are some facts related to the Vibrant Village Programme?

It focuses on the development of our border villages.

The **Vibrant Village Programme** aims to strengthen and **enhance basic infrastructure** in the villages along the LAC. The objective is to address the **issue of migration**.

Border villages are provided with all **basic amenities**. It includes modern housing and good roads; water and electricity supply; good education, health and communication facilities; access to Door darshan channels.

A **total of 2,962 border villages in five states** will be developed under this scheme.

The scheme will also develop growth centres on the “**hub-and-spoke model**”. It will be done through the promotion of social entrepreneurship, empowerment of youth and women through skill development and entrepreneurship.

Tourism potential will be leveraged through the promotion of **local culture and traditional knowledge**. It will also develop **sustainable eco-agribusinesses** through the “**One village-One product**” concept. The Vibrant Village Programme will address all the **issues of illiteracy**.

What are other initiatives by the government for the development of border villages?

PM Gram Sadak Yojna connects remote villages with all-weather roads. There has been construction of concrete roads in all villages with over 250 inhabitants.

Remote villages were also connected with a **robust optical fibre network**. Similarly, under **PM Awas Yojna**, pucca houses were constructed in remote villages.

People were provided with **water and electricity connections and given toilets**. Under the **Ayushman Bharat Yojna**, villagers were covered under the world’s largest health insurance scheme.

35. [A sustainable model for women’s leadership](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “A sustainable model for women’s leadership” published in “The Hindu” on 16th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Social empowerment

Relevance- Issues related to women

News- Today the world is home to a transformative generation of 900 million adolescent girls and young women. They would become the largest segment of women leaders, change makers, entrepreneurs, and innovators in history if provided with resources and opportunities.

What are the issues faced by women?

Adolescent girls face many **socio-economic barriers** from their earliest years.

The World Bank notes that over 43% of Indian STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) graduates are women. However, they are **under-represented in the workforce and tech leadership**.

There are **prevailing stereotypes** that characterise STEM as a traditionally **masculine domain**.

Gender norms disproportionately allocate **domestic and care responsibilities** to women.

The **public perception** of men as leaders of **STEM, finance, and entrepreneurship** is another **barrier to women empowerment**.

Institutional mechanisms for women are weak. They face the barriers of **inadequate maternity leave, few flexible work arrangements, lack of childcare facilities in the workplace**.

What is the way forward for women empowerment?

A **multi-pronged approach** is needed for women empowerment. Nurturing girls' leadership abilities is our collective first step towards reducing barriers for growth of women.

ICT solutions– Women at all levels of society must have **inclusion in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**. EdTech can bridge the **accessibility gap** in education through **hybrid learning models**,

There is a need to build and scale up **solutions customised to the language, cultural nuances**.

Internet accessibility can give girls equal access to knowledge through **digital inclusion**.

Educational empowerment– There is a need to **counter the stereotypes** against girls. It can be done by inclusion of **grade appropriate STEM, financial education, and entrepreneurship syllabi** into the educational curriculum for girls.

Elements like **Olympiads, innovation labs, bootcamps and competitions** should be included in the educational curriculum for girls.

Bodily autonomy and safety– Women need to be empowered to make decisions about their bodies. They should have freedom to decide about their **sexual choices**. They also need to be free from all forms of **violence and harassment**.

Participation in sports– The inclusion of women in sports is necessary. It can build their self-confidence. It will promote **leadership in women, strengthen their self-belief, and teach them the importance of teamwork**.

Economic empowerment– It is crucial for us to **recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work**. They should have shared responsibility within the household, and equal participation in decision making spaces.

Policies that provide **services, social protection and basic infrastructure to women and create more paid jobs in the care Economy** are urgently needed.

36. China, India and the promise of the power of two

Source– The post is based on the article “China, India and the promise of the power of two” published in “The Hindu” on 16th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral grouping and agreements

Relevance– India and China bilateral relationship

News– The year 2023 marks a high point in India's diplomacy, with its presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the G-20. The focus is also on China which held important “two sessions” recently.

What is the Chinese perspective about its growth trajectory?

China is **advancing modernisation** on all fronts. Here, the path to modernisation is focused on **high -quality development**.

China has achieved “**steady growth**”. In 2022, China's economy grew by 3%. A total of 12.06 million urban jobs were added. China's GDP has registered an annual growth rate of 5.2% over the past five years. China's economic strength is steadily reaching new heights.

The focus is upon “**people's well being**”. China has historically **resolved absolute poverty**. It has alleviated close to **100 million rural residents** from poverty. Over 70% of the government's expenditure went toward ensuring people's well-being. Living standards continue to witness new improvements.

China is “**opening up**”. In 2022, China's total volume of trade in goods exceeded **40 trillion yuan**. It registered an annual growth rate of 8.6%. The country remained one of the top destinations for foreign investors.

China's development has led to “**win-win cooperation**”. In the period 2013--2021, China's contribution to global economic growth averaged 38.6%. It is higher than that of G7 countries combined.

Xi Jinping proposed the **Global Development Initiative (GDI)** in a speech at the UNGA in 2021. More than 100 countries have expressed their support and over 60 countries have joined the Group of Friends of the GDI.

What are areas of convergence between India and China?

Both countries are neighbours and **ancient civilisations with a combined population of 2.8 billion**. They are **representatives of developing countries and emerging economies**.

India and China are both in the **process of national rejuvenation and a crucial period of modernisation**. China and India have **far more common interests than differences**.

Bilateral trade volume reaching \$135.984 billion in 2022, though there is a trade deficit.

Investments by Chinese enterprises have created a large number of jobs for the Indian people and contributed to India's economic development.

In his recent meeting with India's External Affairs Minister, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang said that the **development and revitalisation** of China and India give a boost to the **force of developing countries**.

It will change the destiny of a third of the world's population. It will impact the future of

37. The denial of same-sex marriages violates a basic right

Source: The post is based on the article **"The denial of same-sex marriages violates a basic right"** published in the **Live Mint** on **16th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About legalization of same-sex marriages.

News: The US Supreme Court decided to overturn bans on same-sex marriage in 13 states in 2015. With petitions seeking the legalization of same-sex marriages in India, it is time for the Indian Supreme Court to do the same.

About the case and Centre's affidavit on same-sex marriages

Must read: [Same-sex marriages can rock societal values: Centre](#)

What are the issues in the centre's affidavit on legalising same-sex marriages?

The centre's view that the legislature has the right to define who can be considered married is a **denial of Indian diversity**. The government cannot take the responsibility to "regulate or prohibit" human relations.

Read here: [About legalising same-sex marriages: Inaction and intervention: On the handling of social issues](#)

According to a judge, Marriage matters because it is a "keystone of our social order." India's ethos and traditions defining acceptable behaviour should aid in the legalization of same-sex marriages.

38. State Of Head Governors have been seen as partisan for decades. They should be accountable to Centre, state & Rajya Sabha

Source: The post is based on the article **"State Of Head – Governors have been seen as partisan for decades. They should be accountable to Centre, state & Rajya Sabha"** published in **The Times of India** on **17th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About friction points between governor and state governments.

News: The Supreme Court has questioned the Maharashtra governor's rationale in calling for a trust vote that led to the resignation of the Chief Minister.

What was the issue about?

Read more: [Governors cannot precipitate the fall of elected governments: Supreme Court](#)

What are the various friction points between governor and state governments?

- The biggest issues against the governors are they are **not giving assent to bills passed by assemblies**. In some cases, governors are **delaying assent to bills** which directly affect governance in the states. For instance, the Telangana government recently moved to SC as their Governor has not signed seven bills and has not cleared the state budget.
- The SC is hearing a Punjab CM vs governor case. In that, the SC has said that the levels of discourse should not degenerate into a “race to the bottom”.
- Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Bengal have all protested governors’ using their office in a manner that’s seen as slowing down or meddling in state government function.
- The other friction point include governors’ refusal to convene assembly sessions, and vice-chancellor appointments.

Read more: [Issues Related to the Office of Governor – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done to reduce friction points between governor and state governments?

Governors have been perceived to be following the Centre’s writ, whichever the party in the Centre. To correct this, governors should be made accountable to not just the Centre but also the state and Rajya Sabha.

Read more: [The Supreme Court’s Judgment on Pardoning Powers of the Governor – Explained, pointwise](#)

39. 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**.

40. 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**.

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.

41. 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.

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**.

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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.

42. 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 tranquillity 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.

43. 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.

44. [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.

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**.

45. [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**.

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**.

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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.

46. [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.

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**.

47. 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.

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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 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.

48. [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.

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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**.

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.

49. [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**.

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**.

50. 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.

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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”**.

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**.

51. 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).

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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.

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](#).

52. [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.

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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

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 though 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.

53. 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.

54. [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 **StopTB 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.

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**.

55. 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, and not statistically representative. Whereas the quantitative 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.

56. [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.

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.

57. [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.

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.

58. 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).

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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.

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.

59. [‘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**.

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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**.

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.

60. [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.

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,

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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?](#)

61. [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.

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**.

62. [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.

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.

63. [What's The Missing Block In Building Institutes Of Excellence?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**What's The Missing Block In Building Institutes Of Excellence?**” published in **The Times of India** on **27th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues related to development and management of education

Relevance: concerns with regulating higher educational institutes.

News: The article discusses the problems with regulating higher educational institutes in India and measures that address the issue.

What are issues with regulating higher education in India?

There are numerous higher education regulators in India with University Grants Commission (UGC) being the largest regulator.

The problem with multiple regulators is that **educational institutes cannot promote holistic and multi-disciplinary education.**

However, in order to become self-reliant, a country needs a knowledgeable and skilled workforce with the **regulators focusing on providing learning outcomes-based education and individualised learning on a mass scale.**

This can only happen by **building higher education institutes of excellence** and by investing in academic and research excellence.

However, building excellence institutions is difficult if several regulators work in silos with no consultation processes and with overlapping roles.

Hence, the concern of multiple regulators has been addressed by [National Educational Policy \(NEP\) 2020](#) through Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).

About Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)

HECI will be established through **an act of Parliament**. It will have **four verticals** – 1) a regulatory vertical, 2) an accreditation vertical, 3) a funding vertical, and 4) a standard-setting vertical.

Each of them will function in an autonomous mode but in a coordinated manner.

HECI will holistically integrate multiple higher education disciplines in all degree providing colleges.

Further, the use of the [Academic Bank of Credits](#) by all educational institutions will provide mobility for students to move from one institution to another or migrate from one discipline to another.

Read More: [Higher Education Commission of India \(HECI\)](#)

How can HECI function as an effective regulator?

HECI should refrain from bringing out regulations in areas requiring no regulation. It should assess the impact of regulations on functioning of higher education institutes and changes that can be brought through such regulations.

HECI can take input from stakeholders such as students, faculty members, non-teaching staff, institutional heads, etc. for formulating the regulations.

On the whole, the **function of HECI must be transparent, open to take suggestions and feedback, practise regulatory self-restraint and intervene only when there is necessity for intervention.**

There is also a need to create an **interconnected web of regulatory functions** under the different verticals of HECI. This will ensure that the regulations brought by one regulatory body gets considered in the jurisdiction of another regulatory body.

Must Read: [Inclusive Development in Education – Explained](#)

What is the way ahead?

As a consolidated regulator, **HECI can play a revolutionary role in making India's higher education** suitable for innovative ideas while boosting India's ambitions to develop institutes of excellence.

64. [Making sense of the disqualification of a Lok Sabha MP](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article

“Making sense of the disqualification of a Lok Sabha MP” published in **The Hindu** on **27th March 2023**.

“We need to review defamation, raise the bar for disqualification” published in **Indian Express** on **27th March 2023**.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business.

News: An opposition party leader recently disqualified after the verdict in a criminal defamation case.

Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) specifies the offences that disqualifies a member of the legislature.

Clause (3) of this section specifies that the member can also be disqualified for the conviction under any offence other than the ones mentioned in the other two clauses, for which he/she is sentenced to not less than two years.

Since, **Lily Thomas vs Union of India**, 2013 case judgment, the bar on instant disqualification upon conviction has been lifted.

However, if the Court stays the conviction and sentence, the disqualification will be lifted, and the membership will be restored to the legislature.

Read More – [Criminal defamation in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is another view regarding instant disqualification upon conviction?

It is a general view that the seat of the legislature shall fall vacant as soon as conviction and sentence are announced by the trial court. However, a closer look reveals that the words, use in Section 8(3) of RP Act, **“shall be disqualified”**, cannot mean instant disqualification. If there were words, **“shall stand disqualified”**, it would have meant instant disqualification, without any act from any authority.

At present, the interpretation suggests that that the person shall be disqualified by some authority. As per the [article 103](#), President is authorised to take such decisions.

There are some expert’s opinion that article 103 can be invoked only when a dispute arises on the fact of disqualification. However, this article covers the disqualifications arising due to offences under Section 8 of the RP Act 1951. SC, uphold this positions in Consumer Education and Research Society vs Union of India (2009) case. In this case, President performs adjudicatory and declaratory functions.

In cases where adjudication is not required, the President can simply declare that the sitting Member has become subject to disqualification. But the intervention of the President is essential under Article 103 even in cases where a sitting member has been convicted and the disqualification takes effect from the date of conviction.

Therefore, the notification issued by Lok Sabha Secretariat disqualifying Rahul Gandhi was not correct. Section 8 (3) does not specify which authority is empowered to disqualify an MP; therefore, President must have been referred in this case.

What are other issues associated, as per Former CEC S Y Quraishi?

First, in another such case, in October 2013, Rasheed Masood became 1st legislature to lose his membership. After that, over 20 other legislators, including Lalu Prasad, have been disqualified. However, the case of Lakshadweep MP Mohammed Faisal is unique. He was awarded a 10-year sentence in a criminal case. 2 days later, Lok Sabha Secretariat issued a notification to disqualify him.

In January, the Kerala High Court stayed Faisal’s conviction and stayed the by-poll. However, he is not yet reinstated on his position. Here the question arises, why the suspension of conviction by Court did not come into immediate effect, like the disqualification. In *Lok Prahari v Election Commission of India* (2018), the Supreme Court held that once a conviction has been

stayed during the pendency of an appeal, the disqualification which operates as a consequence of the conviction cannot remain in effect.

Second, what was the reason for treating the Rahul Gandhi's remarks as criminal defamation instead of civil defamation. Furthermore, why was the sentence of the maximum possible prison-term of two years was awarded.

Third, how many of our politicians can truly survive the test of Section 153 (a) and Section 505 (Acts deal with promoting enmity based on religious and linguistic grounds.)

What are the issues with Lily Thomas judgements?

As per P.D.T. Achary (Author of the article), there are many flaws with the Lily Thomas judgment:

1) Article 103 provides that the disqualification of sitting Members shall be decided by the President. So, constitution distinguishes between candidates and sitting Members. SC ignored this fact and struck down the time window of 3 months.

2) A temporary exemption in favour of a sitting member is a reasonable requirement. Because a sudden disqualification will lead to constituency losing its representative. Section 8(4) was enacted to deal with precisely such a situation.

Why Criminal Defamation law needs a relook?

Many countries including U.K., U.S. and Sri Lanka have scrapped the criminal defamation law.

In Kultar Singh vs Mukhtiar Singh (1965), the Supreme Court advocated for allowance to the politicians for the rhetorical, hyperbolic or metaphoric words in the atmosphere, which is usually surcharged with partisan feelings and emotions.

People of mature democracies must be able to enjoy humour without any fear.

65. Understanding IMF bailouts

Source: This post is created based on the article **"Understanding IMF bailouts"**, published in **Indian Express** on 27th Feb 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – International Institutions

News: IMF recently approved a bailout plan for Sri Lanka. It is also in a negotiation with Pakistan for bailout plan.

What are the situations in which nations seek IMF bailout?

When nations face major macroeconomic risk, mostly in the form of a currency crisis. In the case of both Pakistan and Sri Lanka, their currency value has dropped steeply against the U.S. dollar. Currency depreciation often results into government forcing central banks to create fresh money without any basis. It results in a rapid rise of the overall money supply. It leads to price rise due to demand and further reducing currency value.

The rapid decline in the currency value makes people hesitant to accept the currency in exchange for goods and services.

It also discourages foreign investment into country.

Many times, domestic policies of government adversely impacts the currency's exchange rate and foreign exchange reserves. For example, in the case of Sri Lanka, a decrease in foreign tourists visiting the country led to a steep fall in the flow of U.S. dollars into the nation.

It results into shortage of money to meet their external debt and other obligations, to purchase essential imports, and also to prop up the exchange value of their currencies.

In this case, countries seek IMF's help.

How IMF helps countries in distress?

The IMF lends money, often in the form of [special drawing rights](#) (SDRs),

IMF provides assistance to countries through a number of lending programs such as the extended credit facility, the flexible credit line, the stand-by agreement, etc.

What are the conditions of IMF's bailout and are these justified?

IMF imposes certain conditions, before it lends any money to countries. The country will have to agree to implement certain structural reforms as a condition to receive IMF loans.

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As per some critics, these reforms are too tough on the public of country. Some accuses IMF's conditions to be influenced by international politics.

However, IMF argues that countries that seek an IMF bailout are usually in a crisis due to certain policies adopted by their governments. Thus, it will not be fruitful for IMF to waste the resources on country, where same policies continue. For instance, the IMF may demand a country affected by high price inflation to ensure the independence of its central bank. Handling corruption is usually one of the demands, like in case of Sri Lanka.

66. [AUKUS focus is on submarine tech., there is no room for a fourth nation: sources](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Understanding IMF bailouts**”, published in **Indian Express** on 27th Feb 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – International Organisations

News: As per the sources, submarine technology development is the primary focus of the [AUKUS](#) arrangement. In this segment, there is no scope of potential collaboration between AUKUS and India.

However, cooperation with India is possible in the second pillar for broader technology cooperation.

Pillar-2 of the group is useful for cooperation in technologies like electronic warfare, cyberspace and quantum.

Under AUKUS arrangement, Australia will receive at least three second-hand SSNs from the U.S. in the 2030s as an interim measure. While U.K. will design and develop five new SSNs from the early 2040s to the late 2050s.

Official sources also confirms that cooperation between India and the U.S. on such a sensitive technology as the SSN is unlikely. It is because of the U.S. regulatory frameworks and India's strategic autonomy.

India has its own indigenous programme for the design and development of SSNs. However, India is still looking to procure six advanced conventional submarines to arrest its depleting submarine strength, and also speeding up its SSN programme.

67. [The cost of insurance-based funding](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**The cost of insurance-based funding**”, published in **The Hindu** on 27th Feb 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2, Issues associated with Health

Context: The article discusses the features of Tamil Nadu public health model that made it successful.

In comparison to all India average, Tamil Nadu has achieved significant improvements in maternal and infant mortality and universal immunisation coverage, and a low total fertility rate. Its health infrastructure is far better compared to all India average.

Therefore, there is a need to analyse the TN health model, its pros and cons.

How is TN health infrastructure financed?

The funding for the health infra comes from the National Health Mission to the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (CMCHIS).

The union government and state governments are bearing the health burden of the state in a 60:40 ratio. The State government bears the insurance premium of the remaining 60 lakh families out of total. The indirect funding through the insurance companies have made it possible for the state government, but it also has its own implications:

First, it led to decentralisation of medical and healthcare administration. Now, heads of the department are empowered to purchase drugs. Now, individual departments can prioritise their needs and hasten decisions in patient care.

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Second, as every department in the medical college has become an individual establishment, they compete with one another to maximise profit and minimise losses. Now, the secondary and tertiary healthcare systems look at the patient's ailment from the view of indemnity.

Insurance companies are delaying the payments due to administrative reasons. So, the overworked hospital staff also need to focus on the negotiations with the insurance companies. Cost cutting has led to hiring of high number of contractual staff.

Third, Doctors in the primary health centres are functioning like managers rather than clinicians. They focus has been shifted to implementation of Union government schemes using available finances.

Fourth, creation of district health societies is making the system complicated. These societies recruit doctors on a 11-month contract with a consolidated monthly emolument of ₹60,000, nurses for ₹15,000 and health workers for ₹8,500. These contractual employment for doctors is discouraging for 10,725 MBBS passing out every year.

Fifth, between 2012 and 2021, ₹7,783 crore was allotted in the CMCHIS to insurance companies in Tamil Nadu. Of this amount, majority has been claimed by private sector. It will lead to shrinking space for public hospitals.

Sixth, India has achieved good health results by ensuring doctors came from different socio-economic strata and by empowering them with good pay and providing opportunities for post-graduation and super specialisation.

Therefore, the profit-loss calculation and treatment of public health as a health industry will lead to loss of empathy for patients among health professionals.

68. [Express View: SC order on UAPA lowers the bar for state when restricting freedoms](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Express View: SC order on UAPA lowers the bar for state when restricting freedoms”** published in the **Indian Express** on **27th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Relevance: About membership of a banned association.

News: Recently, the Supreme Court has held that mere membership of a banned association is sufficient to constitute an offence under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967.

About the recent SC ruling

Must read: [Supreme Court changes stand; now mere membership of a banned outfit is a crime under UAPA](#)

What are the previous rulings of the court on membership of a banned association?

Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA states that where an association is declared unlawful by a notification, “a person, who is and continues to be a member of such association shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, and shall also be liable to fine”.

In 2011, the court discussed the line between advocacy and incitement to violence. The court also discussed how a passive membership or intellectual sympathy to a cause can spill over to a real call to violence. The ruling distinguished between active and passive members. In the same year, the court applied the same principle in two other cases and granted bail.

Both the centre and state of Assam had sought a review of this reading. The present ruling has overruled three older cases.

What are the reasons for overruling the decision?

Firstly, the court accepted the state's argument that **1)** there are sufficient safeguards in the stringent UAPA framework, **2)** State is taking “every effort to ensure that every member of the association is made aware of the fact that such association is declared as unlawful”, **3)** The government declare an organisation as unlawful only after a robust adversarial process wherein ample opportunity is given to the organisation to appeal before judiciary to justify its aims,

objectives and activities being legal and not 'unlawful'. This is done within the constitutional setup.

Secondly, the “court ought not to have relied upon the US Supreme Court judgments” since the US law is “in contradistinction to the scenario in question in India”. The court also explained that in the landmark *Maneka Gandhi v Union of India* case the court expanded on personal liberty. On the other hand, free speech in the US is unrestricted.

69. [The Supreme Court puts the spotlight on the mode of execution in death penalty cases](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The Supreme Court puts the spotlight on the mode of execution in death penalty cases**” published in the **Indian Express** on **27th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the mode of execution in death penalty cases.

News: Recent Supreme Court debates have spotlighted the mode of execution in death penalty cases.

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?

Read more: [Abolition is the way: On the higher judiciary’s move on the death penalty](#)

What are the issues associated with the execution by hanging in death penalty?

Immense suffering while executing: A documentary on “instantaneous death” by dislocating the cervical vertebrae in the US and the UK exposes that the persons undergo immense suffering due to asphyxiation before dying.

Chances of errors: Researchers have found that death by hanging has many instances of snapped ropes, necks that slipped out of nooses, partial or total decapitations, and slow death due to strangulation (instead of having the neck broken).

So, the immediate and painless nature of death attributed to hanging is an exception rather than the rule.

Global shift: Various courts including the Privy Council, the Supreme Court of Uganda and the High Court of Tanzania have relied on the suffering caused by hangings to reject it as a humane method of execution.

Issues in implementation: Ever since the constitutional validity of the death penalty was upheld, significant constitutional concerns have emerged over every aspect of its administration.

What are the challenges in changing the mode of execution in death penalty cases?

Meeting constitutional requirements: Just because the death penalty is currently permissible it is not open to the state to use any method of execution. Any mode of execution that the state adopts must be capable of meeting constitutional requirements and that is a burden for the state to discharge.

Issues with lethal injections: Execution in death penalty using lethal injections have the following issues. **a)** Irrefutable evidence from the US that lethal injections have been mishandled and leading to immense suffering. For example, a private study that examined 9,000 executions in the US between 1900 to 2010 found that executions using lethal injection had a higher rate of being botched than any other method, **b)** The procedure of lethal injections has not been scientifically or medically studied on human beings.

Note: Most states rely on a three-drug combination of sodium thiopental, pancuronium bromide and potassium chloride for lethal injections. While sodium thiopental puts the prisoner to sleep, pancuronium bromide renders the prisoner paralytic and unable to show any pain before potassium chloride causes cardiac arrest.

What should be done?

Instead of searching for the mode of execution in the death penalty, India should revisit the very administration of the death penalty in India.

Read more: [Death penalty: Deciding the rarest of the rare](#)

70. Supreme Court verdict on UAPA is fraught with risk

Source- The post is based on the article “Supreme Court verdict on UAPA is fraught with risk of making it legal for agencies to act lawlessly while claiming to fight terrorism and preserve State’s security” published in “The Indian Express” on 28th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance- Important judgement impacting the rights of people

News- Recently, the Supreme Court in **Arup Bhuyan vs The State Of Assam Home Department** held that mere membership of a banned association is sufficient to constitute an offence under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

What are issues concerning the judgement?

The judgement is **fraught with the risk**. Agencies can **act lawlessly** while claiming to fight terrorism and preserve the State’s security.

Unless there is a **specific intent to enhance the abilities** of an unlawful organisation, convicting a person as a member is a **violation of the rule of law**. The verdict also suffers from **substantive contradictions in its reasoning**.

The Court has set aside the reading down of both **Section 10(a)(i), UAPA**. It has struck down its previous rulings in **Arup Bhuyan vs State of Assam**, and **State of Kerala vs Raneeef**.

The **Raneeef judgement** provided a narrow interpretation of **Section 10(a)(i) of UAPA**. **Section 10(a)(i)** punishes **membership of unlawful organisations** with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years.

In **Arup Bhuyan (2011)** the Supreme Court ruled that **mere membership of a banned organisation** will not incriminate a person. It can be done if a person **resorts to violence or incites people to violence or does an act intended to create disorder**.

Banned organisations are not known to **keep a registry** with their members’ names, addresses, phone numbers, and email IDs. In most cases, membership must be inferred.

Jyoti Babasaheb Chorge vs State of Maharashtra (2012) demonstrates how innocent young men and women can get incriminated as **members of unlawful organisations merely by association**.

15 people, all young tribal women and men, were charged as members of the [Communist Party of India](#) (Maoist) for possessing Maoist propaganda literature. There was no accusation against them of being involved in any terrorist act or act of violence.

What are the challenges faced by states in case of laws against terrorism?

The definitions of terrorist and unlawful organisations in UAPA are **vague**. The Act merely states that they are organisations **involved in “unlawful activities”** and notified as such.

States worldwide are facing troubles in **defining terrorism and terrorist groups with some precision**. Their purpose is to protect against the **inappropriate labelling** of people as terrorists, and to **curtail the abuse** of counterterrorism powers.

Mislabelling dilutes efforts to combat actual terrorism. It undermines **democratic values and institutions** and increases the security threat.

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71. [Golden fist: On the victory for Indian women boxers](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Golden fist: On the victory for Indian women boxers**” published in **The Hindu** on **28th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Indian women boxers.

News: Indian women boxers collected four gold medals in the recent Delhi World championships. This is a significant milestone ahead of Hangzhou Asian Games, a qualifying event for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

What are some significant achievements of Indian women boxers in the recent Delhi World championship?

Nitu Ghanghas, Nikhat Zareen, Lovlina Borgohain and Saweety Boora have won the gold medals and India topped the medal sheet.

Note: In 2006 also India collected four gold medals as M.C. Mary Kom, Sarita Devi, K.C. Lekha and R.L. Jenny won.

Nikhat Zareen became the second Indian after Mary to win more than one World title.

How International Boxing Association (IBA) is helping women boxers?

The IBA tried to ensure transparency and fairness. It took action against below-par match officials and athletes who seemingly enjoyed an unfair advantage. It offered a lucrative prize purse, including \$100,000 to each winner, and financial support to boxers as an incentive to boost participation.

What will be the way forward?

The IBA is in conflict with the International Olympic Committee due to its exclusion from the Olympics over various issues. This has to be rectified.

The event demonstrated the competitiveness and appeal of women's boxing. The successful conduct of the event has encouraged the IBA to look at India as a potential market for boxing destinations. The Boxing Federation of India's also need to conduct more elite events to inspire the boxing community further.

72. [Healthcare in India has made great progress, but challenges remain](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**Healthcare in India has made great progress, but challenges remain**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **28th March 2023**.

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

News- The article deals with challenges faced by the healthcare sector in India.

What are the achievements of India in healthcare?

In 2007, it was estimated that India would achieve a total fertility rate of 2.1 only by 2041. India has achieved this by 2020.

High maternal and infant mortality seemed very difficult to overcome in 2010. Ten years later, the latest NFHS-5 findings show that in BIMARU states, hospital deliveries have soared to 89 per cent.

What are the challenges faced by the healthcare sector in India?

Non-communicable diseases – Cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are increasing. They all share four **behavioural risk factors** — an unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity and use of tobacco and alcohol.

‘India: Health of the nation's states’ report estimated that the proportion of deaths due to non-communicable diseases has increased from **around 38% in 1990 to 62% in 2016**.

Obesity has increased **from 19% to 23% between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5**. Among Delhi's citizens, 38 per cent were found to be obese, followed by Tamil Nadu and Kerala. This increases the risk of diabetes, hypertension, and CVD.

Inequalities in the state of infrastructure– Since 2018, governments at the Centre as well as the state are establishing **health and wellness centres**. But a 2022 report by the **Centre for Community Medicine in AIIMS** found huge **variations between states**.

Some northeastern states like Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland were found to have better arrangements. The lowest proportions of primary health facilities were in Jharkhand, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

Inequalities– In urban areas, the challenge is to **bridge the gap** in hospital services between large urban agglomerations and tier II and tier III cities.

A recent **Lancet publication** found that core health services are **not uniform** across state-run district hospitals. Just 16% of the district hospitals in Tamil Nadu offered all key services. In some states, it was just 1%. People have to bank on the private sector.

Large hospital chains like Apollo, Fortis account for just 4-5% of the beds in the private sector. Standalone hospitals and nursing homes provide 95% of private hospital beds. They are unable to provide **multi-specialty, tertiary and quaternary care**.

Insurance and high expenditure on health– The other problems centre around **low health insurance penetration and the very high personal outgo** on healthcare. From 2018, the **Ayushman Bharat insurance** scheme for 10 crore poor families has been undertaken. Nearly 74% of Indians are either covered or eligible for health insurance coverage.

However, millions remain uninsured. **Out-patient doctor consultation costs, diagnostics, and drugs** account for around 50% of the total health expenditure.

It is, therefore, essential to provide insurance for the **unorganised middle class** and to include identified out-patient costs.

Use of Artificial Intelligence and digital technology– Use of AI for healthcare is welcome. But there are **ethical and regulatory concerns** related to it. A new dimension has made the regulation of healthcare even more compelling.

73. The entry of foreign firms should herald more legal sector reforms

Source: The post is based on the article “**The entry of foreign firms should herald more legal sector reforms**” published in **Live Mint** on **29th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

Relevance: measures needed to bring legal reforms

News: The Bar Council of India (BCI) has allowed foreign lawyers and foreign law firms to practice and set up offices in India.

About the BCI decision to permit foreign lawyers

Read Here: [Foreign lawyers, firms can operate in India: BCI](#)

Foreign lawyers and firms will be allowed to practice on the **principle of reciprocity**. This means that the other country must also offer similar treatment to Indian lawyers and firms.

What are the advantages of allowing foreign firms in India?

The BCI Rules for **Registration and Regulation of Foreign Lawyers and Foreign Law Firms in India, 2023**, states that the standards and proficiency of Indian lawyers and firms are up to international standards.

Therefore, allowing foreign lawyers and firms will –a) help in the growth of the legal profession, b) generate employment and retainership opportunities, c) provide global exposure to Indian lawyers.

Read More: [Global law, local practice – BCI’s move recognises India’s corporate globalisation](#)

What other steps can be taken to bring legal reforms in the country?

Allow FDI in Indian law firms: As per the rules, **persons not qualified to practice law in India are restricted from investing in a law firm.** This makes Indian law firms to be dependent on the domestic capital from the lawyers.

Further, restricting FDI to the Indian legal firms will give the competitive advantage to foreign legal firms operating in India.

Hence, allowing FDI in legal sector will – **a)** allow Indian lawyers and law firms to raise foreign capital, **b)** benefit Indian legal sector through innovation and technology **c)** help local legal entrepreneurs create more startups.

Lift restrictions on solicitation and advertising: Indian legal professionals are barred from advertising their legal services **because their services are considered to be in the public interest of securing justice.** This makes commercialization of the legal profession undesirable. However, in reality this profession is already commercialized. Lawyers and law firms are in the business of serving clients and charge fees for their services.

Therefore, lifting restriction on advertising the legal profession will – **a)** enable efficient price discovery in the legal market as lawyers or firms could reveal their fees and charges, **b)** price discovery would allow more individuals and firms to enter the legal market and lead to growth and lower service charge, **c)** encourage market players to conduct research and innovation that might offer superior services, as seen in advanced countries.

What is the way ahead?

India is set to reach a size of \$5 trillion plus in a few years. This will increase the demand for quality legal services and **better dispute resolution mechanisms are integral to a sound business environment and the ease of doing business.**

Therefore, the BCI, law ministry, policymakers and other stakeholders must make policies that will lead to growth, development and innovation in the legal sector to better serve the interests of justice and the economy.

74. Healthcare in India has made great progress, but challenges remain

Source: The post is based on the article “**Healthcare in India has made great progress, but challenges remain**” published in **The Indian Express** on **29th March 2023.**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues Related to Healthcare

Relevance: challenges with healthcare

News: The article discusses the progress made in healthcare and associated challenges.

What are some of the progresses made in healthcare?

It was believed that India would achieve a total fertility rate of 2.1 only by 2041.

However, as per the recent **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5)**, India achieved it by 2020 and hospital deliveries even in the backward states have increased to 89 percent. However, challenges in healthcare still remain.

What are the challenges with healthcare in India?

Diseases: Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (CRDs) and diabetes are prevalent. These are **caused by an unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity and use of tobacco and alcohol.**

As per a report, the proportion of deaths due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) has increased from around 38 percent in 1990 to 62 percent in 2016.

Obesity has increased from 19 per cent to 23 per cent between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5. This increases the risk of diabetes, hypertension, and CVD.

Infrastructure: The government is building primary healthcare by establishing health and wellness centres. However, as per a recent report, there **is a huge variation between states.**

For example, some states like Mizoram and Gujarat had better healthcare arrangements in their health centres while the situation was grim in Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh.

Urban areas: The challenge in the urban areas lies in bridging the gap in hospital services between large urban agglomerations and tier II and tier III cities.

As per a Lancet report, **the provision of core health services is not uniform across state-run district hospitals.**

For example, while only 16 percent of the district hospitals in Tamil Nadu offered all key services, it was just 1 per cent in Mizoram and UP.

Private hospitals: Private hospitals own two-thirds of the country's hospital beds.

Large hospital like Apollo, Fortis, Max, account for just 4-5 percent of the beds while **standalone hospitals and nursing homes provide 95 percent of private hospital beds.**

However, **standalone hospitals and nursing homes are unable to provide multi-specialty, leave alone tertiary and quaternary care.**

Therefore, there is a need to bridge the gap between services available in the metros and big cities and in districts. This can be done by **making the centrally-run hospital and the district hospitals fully functional.**

Health Insurance: Schemes such as the [Ayushman Bharat](#), the Employees State Insurance (ESIC), and CGHS have covered nearly 74 percent of Indians.

However, millions remain uninsured. Out-patient doctor consultation costs, diagnostics, and drugs **account for the 50 percent of out-of-pocket (OOP) personal expenditure.**

It is, therefore, essential to provide insurance for the unorganised middle class and to include identified out-patient costs.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital technology: These would bring revolution in healthcare. However, **ethical and regulatory concerns remain.**

Due to this, Indian Council of Medical Research released [guidelines](#) for the lack of accountability for machine-made medical decisions. However, regulations are also needed for substandard institutions and for unqualified medical practitioners.

75. [Suspect moves: On changes to reservation policy in Karnataka](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Suspect moves: On changes to reservation policy in Karnataka**” published in **The Hindu** on **29th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the recent reservation policy of Karnataka.

News: The Karnataka government decided to scrap the 4% quota for Muslims within the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category and earmark an additional 2% each to the dominant Vokkaliga and Veerashaiva-Lingayat communities. This is reminiscent of the abrogation of the 5% quota for Muslims in Maharashtra in 2015.

Note: *The Karnataka State Backward Classes Commission has not recommended for the withdrawal of reservations for Muslims.*

What will be the impact of the decision?

a) The scrapping of reservations for Muslims, including their poorer members, will now have to compete with the general category for the 10% ‘Economically Weaker Sections’ quota, **b)** The move will be seen as discriminative and divisive against a minority group in the hope of garnering the support of the majority.

Read more: [On reservation for women in politics](#)

What are the constitutional provisions for reservation?

The Constitution **does not allow reservation on the basis of religion alone.** For example, there have been judicial verdicts striking down quotas for Muslims for not being backed by a proper study of the extent of backwardness in the community.

However, it is possible to extend reservation benefits to the backward sections among religious minorities identified on the basis of relevant criteria. For example, some States have been

implementing reservations in educational institutions as well as public employment for Muslims by including them in the Backward Classes (BC) list.

In conclusion, major decisions, such as changing the reservation policy, in the run-up to elections may end up creating unwanted fires.

Read more: [Supreme Court's Judgment on EWS Reservation – Explained, pointwise](#)

76. Civil society organizations require wholesome support

Source: The post is based on an article “**Civil society organizations require wholesome support**” published in **Live Mint** on **30th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Non-Governmental Organisations

Relevance: concerns associated with CSOs

News: Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and other kinds of not-for-profit organizations are working for societal improvement.

The article discusses concerns associated with CSOs.

What are the concerns associated with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)?

Donors want to support costs which are incurred for programs and activities that directly deliver the desired benefits or improvements to intended communities.

However, they don't want to support other costs involved in the operation of the CSOs, known as **overhead cost**. It is impractical for a CSO to only focus on the outcome while neglecting other costs.

For example, a CSO working with public schools to enhance learning will have team members who train and assist teachers. Their salaries and activity costs are just as essential as the teaching-learning-material and resources given to schools.

The donors in this case, will be ready to support teaching material and not for the salaries and expenses for the staff of CSOs.

Further, **donors expect CSOs to be strong and stable organizations** which have good processes, sound accounting and reporting, leadership succession and development, the capacity to scale up, and more.

However, **a CSO can only become stable when it is being financially supported for these things**.

Some donors provide support for CSO **overhead expenses ranging from 5-10% of the cost base**, which is very low given the enormous amount of expense needed by CSOs to function.

Hence, a reasonable donation for overhead cost should range from 15%-25%.

Moreover, **donors are also reluctant to commit long term funding for CSOs**. This has weakening effect on Indian civil society.

What can be the way ahead?

Donors usually look for a strong, vibrant and high-capacity CSO ecosystem. This is only possible when they start supporting CSOs objectives along with their overhead costs wholeheartedly.

77. India needs public policy education

Source- The post is based on the article “**India needs public policy education**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **30th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Governance

Relevance- Reforms in administration

News- The article explains the importance of public policy education.

What are issues with public management education in India?

Lack of institutions– Most executives in government require an understanding of **public management**. However, the supply of **formal education in public management** is inadequate as compared to business management education.

As per data from the AICTE, there are 3,182 institutions with an approved intake of 4.22 lakh in business management programmes. But only about 130 universities offer **public administration programmes** and only 29 institutes that offer **public policy programmes**.

Lack of opportunities– There are **few jobs available** for people pursuing courses in public management. The private sector offers limited opportunities in **government advisory roles, consulting and Corporate Social Responsibility**.

For public sector opportunities, students have to go through competitive exams. Therefore, neither educational institutes nor students find **any incentive** to prefer public management courses.

Lack of public policy training– There are very few civil servants who have got **exposure to public management** before joining service. Most of them undergo the **departmental induction training programme**.

There are **a few opportunities for in-service officers** to study public management in India and abroad. In the 10 years between 2012 and 2021, 194 civil service officers went abroad to study public management at the Master's level.

Within the country, there are five institutions in which 194 civil service officers have been sponsored by the government for **full time public policy courses** in the last three years.

What is the way forward to boost public management education in India?

Public management should be one of the **compulsory subjects for the UPSC civil service examination**. This will help in multiple ways.

Existing training institutions of the government should have a **larger component of public policy** as part of induction training. They should build up a case study bank for training.

The government can create **certain specialised positions of public policy analysts**, to be picked up from the market directly. **New job avenues** for the graduates of public policy programmes can be created by this.

How introducing public management as an optional subject in UPSC creates a win-win situation?

First, civil servants who join the government would have **formal education in public management** before they enter service.

Second, this creates an **opportunity or incentive** for universities and private institutions to offer the subject at the graduate or postgraduate level. Public policy education, research and case studies will get a major boost from this new demand.

Third, those who don't clear the exam would develop **better understanding in public management**. It will make them **better citizens as well as effective private sector managers**.

78. SMART PDS scheme: A bold initiative in digitisation

Source– The post is based on the article “**SMART PDS scheme: A bold initiative in digitisation**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on 30th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance– Use of digital technology for welfare schemes

News– The article explains the initiatives by the government to digitise the food grain distribution.

What are the benefits of Scheme for Modernisation and Reforms through Technology in Public Distribution System (SMART-PDS)?

It prevents **leakage of foodgrains**, **increases the efficiency** of the distribution chain and **ensures the availability of such provisions** for migrants.

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A lot of data is being generated and stored every day by states and UTs. **Data Analytics** on the TPDS ecosystem can be used to generate **critical information** about the beneficiaries, their food security needs and patterns of migration.

It can implement **data-driven decision-making**. It can be leveraged for the delivery of many other central schemes and welfare programmes.

Convergence and integration with the use of AI can really be a game changer for people as well as governments in bringing accountability across all programmes.

What are other successful initiatives for digitisation of food grain distribution?

Today, nearly 93% of the total monthly allocated foodgrains are distributed through the [Aadhaar authentication](#) mode using **electronic Point of Sale devices**.

This can be attributed to the **100% digitisation of ration cards, online management of beneficiaries' data, computerisation of foodgrains' allocation and supply chain management systems in all states, and the installation of ePoS devices**.

The government has launched a Central Sector Scheme called **Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS)** To sustain the reforms brought in by the **End-to-end Computerisation of TPDS Operations scheme**.

Its main objectives are: Implementation of [One Nation One Ration Card](#), creation of a **national level data repository** for ration cards data; creation of **integrated data infrastructure** across ration card management.

[One Nation One Ration Card](#) is seamlessly functional in all 36 States and UTs and is consistently recording over 3.5 crore monthly portable transactions. This count is steadily improving. It has so far recorded more than 100 crore portability transactions.

The data generated during this process has now become a tool for many other central ministries and state governments. It includes benefits for the e-Shram Portal, Ayushman Bharat, and PM-SVANidhi Yojana. Agriculture ministry envisages family-based ONORC data to map the beneficiaries.

79. [India's DPIs, catching the next wave](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **"India's DPIs, catching the next wave"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **30th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- e-governance

Relevance- Digital India

News- The article explains India's digital public infrastructure.

What are some facts about India's digital public infrastructure?

India's digital public infrastructure or India Stack is a **partnership** between governments, regulators, the private sector, selfless volunteers, startups, and academia/think tanks.

It has led to many Lego blocks to create a **superstructure** which delivers **consistent, affordable, and across the board value** to citizens, government and the corporate sector.

What are different initiatives under India digital public infrastructure that show its effectiveness?

Aadhaar- The judgement of the Supreme Court of India on privacy led to **slow opening** of Aadhaar to the private sector

The rapid adoption and ease of doing business in day-to-day transactions has now led to a **gradual opening of Aadhaar** for various private sector applications.

Aadhaar holders can **voluntarily use** their Aadhaar for private sector purposes. Private sector entities need not seek special permission for such usage.

Aadhaar data can be **shared between government departments**, but with the **prior informed consent** of the citizen.

Banks and other regulated entities can store Aadhaar numbers as long as they protect it using vault and other similar means.

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UIDAI is making efforts to incentivise Aadhaar usage. Aadhaar authentications have shot up to 2.2 billion per month, and the cumulative number over the past 12 years has crossed 100 billion.

Digi Yatra and DigiLocker– Digi Yatra is a **Biometric Enabled Seamless Travel experience** based on a **facial recognition system** through a partnership between industry and government. It ensures **seamless identification** of passengers at key checkpoints such as airport entry, security check and boarding gate clearance.

About two lakh passengers have utilised this successfully. Air passenger traffic in India was estimated to be over 188 million in the financial year 2022. When Digi Yatra reaches a third of them, it will lead to **second order effects and more innovation**.

DigiLocker is another example. It is one of the **least known Digital Public Infrastructure**. It today has 150 million users, six billion stored documents. Plans are to expand it to many countries around the world.

When one applies for a passport now, one need not even upload any PDF or submit some notarized papers. **A simple consent** on the passport application form allows it to fetch the relevant data from DigiLocker.

Zerodha, Upstox, RazorPay, Equal and many other insurances and fintechs use **DigiLocker API** for their **Know Your Customer**.

Today, there is a lack of a **single portal** at the Union or the State level where industry can see all the **necessary compliances**. An **Enterprise DigiLocker** can be created.

UPI- The unified payment interface or UPI which is breaking records. It has now crossed **eight billion transactions per month** and transacts a value of **\$180 billion a month**.

80. A hardhanded response that strikes at the root of rights

Source- The post is based on the article “**A hardhanded response that strikes at the root of rights**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **30th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance– Issues related to right of workers

News– An estimated 19 lakh government and semi government employees have been on strike demanding that the government return to the Old Pension Scheme

What has been the response of the government towards strikes in India?

Since 1960, the government’s approach to strikes by their employees has been to invoke **ESMA, or the Essential Services Maintenance Act**. It is used both by central and state governments. It was historically a **colonial instrument**. Since 1950, several States on numerous occasions, have promulgated ESMA.

What are issues related to government response to strikes?

Private sector employers argue that the government, which is supposed to be a **model employer**, often uses its **elaborate legislative and police powers**. But they do not have any choice. They have to face a strike and attempt negotiations with striking employees.

There are questions related to the **definition of essential**. There are questions related to the **criteria for defining essential services and duration** for which an industry can be called as an essential service in order to prohibit strikes or protests.

ESMAs empower the government to define any economic activity as essential. It is an example of a **dangerous weaponization of the government**.

What is the ILO stand on right to strike?

The ILO has constructed the principles on the **right to strike**. The basic principle is that workers enjoy the right to strike. It is one of the principal means to **legitimately promote and defend their economic and social interests**.

ILO recognizes “**a general right to strike**” while allowing for an **imposition of restrictions** on strikes by some categories of public servants and workers in essential services. There could be a **prohibition of strike** action during **acute national emergencies**.

The employees in **essential services** do not enjoy the right to strike. Essential services are those where “the interruption of which would **endanger the life, personal safety or health** of the whole or part of the population”.

The **question of essentiality** will depend on the **peculiarities prevalent** in countries. It has identified essential services such as the hospital sector, and services such as electricity, water supply, telephone, and air traffic control. Strikes in these may even be prohibited or strictly regulated.

Where the right to strike is prohibited or strictly regulated, **alternate dispute resolution** mechanisms must be put in place. It has mentioned a **negative list of industries** which are not essential. It includes the transportation and education sectors.

What should be the government’s approach towards strikes?

Governments have entrusted them with wide powers to include any economic activity as essential. It is **irresponsible, unwise and anti-democratic**.

Democracy means an **equitable distribution of power**. But, ESMA monopolizes power while suppressing the **democratic rights of stakeholders**.

India is a **pluralistic democracy** where protests hold an important place. Their sanctity needs to be respected by the government.

Social dialogue rather than authoritarian measures will promote **amicable and long-lasting solutions**.

81. [Institutions of Eminence, mired in red tape](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Institutions of Eminence, mired in red tape**” published in the **Indian Express** on **30th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About challenges faced by the IOE scheme.

News: Even after six years, the Institutions of Eminence (IOE) scheme is yet to become the game changer as it was intended to be.

What is the Institutions of Eminence scheme?

Must read: [Institution of Eminence Scheme](#)

What are the challenges faced by the IOE scheme?

The government funds amounting to Rs 3,000 crore have helped eight public universities initiate ambitious reforms and set up state-of-the-art research infrastructure. But Private IOEs are facing many challenges.

The ethos of India’s higher education ecosystem: This is the biggest Achilles heel for the IOE scheme. The ethos of the higher education ecosystem is decidedly pre-NEP 2020.

The scheme aims to free regulatory intervention is facing regulatory challenges: For example, **a)** four private institutes which received government-empowered committee approval for the IOE tag have not yet got it, **b)** Four institutions which received the IOE tag, continue to face red tape from UGC on matters such as hiring foreign faculty and admitting foreign students. The university regulator’s interventions have led to seats falling vacant in at least three private IOEs.

Defunct of the expert committee: The Empowered Expert Committee which was created to make UGC regulations more flexible for the IOEs has become defunct.

The mandate of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI): The idea of university autonomy is now embedded in the higher education regulator proposed by the National Education Policy — the HECI. This yet-to-be-born agency is mandated to secure IOE-type autonomy for all universities, not just select institutes.

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Not easy to enter the multidisciplinary arena: Institutions which want to enter various domains have to undergo regulations comprises agencies such as the National Medical Commission, Architecture Council of India and the Bar Council.

How India can ensure reforms in the higher education system?

The government has often affirmed its ambition to develop India as a knowledge economy. The move to open up the education sector by inviting foreign universities is part of this attempt. The performance of IOEs shows that much more needs to be done on this front.

82. Neighbours, Big & Small – Bhutan to Bangladesh, New Delhi must prepare to compete with China in the development space

Source: The post is based on the article **“Neighbours, Big & Small – Bhutan to Bangladesh, New Delhi must prepare to compete with China in the development space”** published in **The Times of India** on **30th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Indian neighbours' policy.

News: Recently, Bhutan has said that China has an equal say in resolving the Doklam dispute. This is different from Bhutan's 2019 position which said that the tri-junction point between India, China and Bhutan at Doklam should not be unilaterally disturbed. This shows that Bhutan is taking a more accommodating stance on China because of current geopolitical realities.

What are the challenges faced by Indian neighbours in India – China tussle?

While India and China are locked in their own border disputes along the LAC, other countries in the neighbourhood fear getting caught in the tussle. So, they will sometimes stay away from the two Asian giants' tussle.

Read more: [India failed to create positive impression among businesses moving away from China, says House panel report](#)

What are the impacts of Indian neighbours' policy on India?

Indian neighbours' inaction policy presents a strategic challenge for India. This is because of China's dollar diplomacy and its advantage on Indian neighbours. For instance, a recent report highlights, China has handed out \$240 billion worth of bailout loans to 22 developing countries over two decades. Around 80% of those funds were provided between 2016 and 2021 when Beijing's BRI projects picked up steam.

Must read: [China ramping up bailout loans to BRI countries: Report](#)

On the other hand, forcing Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka to let go of Chinese funds will have the opposite impact and build up resentment against India. For example, the 2015 blockade in Nepal has seriously hurt Indian interests.

Similarly, relations with Bangladesh might be hamper if the Bangladesh government is unable to balance ties with India with Bangladesh's development imperatives.

What India should do?

India needs to **switch to a smarter approach**, drop the Big Brother attitude and work on its own attractiveness by timely completion of development projects. India should also sharpen our 'Neighbourhood First' policy.

83. [Human life, above all: On the Rajasthan Right to Health Act and the stance of doctors](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Human life, above all: On the Rajasthan Right to Health Act and the stance of doctors**” published in **The Hindu** on **30th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Rajasthan Right to Health Act, 2022.

News: The Rajasthan government has recently passed the Right to Health Act. But the doctors in the State are protesting and terming it as a ‘draconian law’.

About Rajasthan Right to Health Act, 2022

-The Act seeks to provide protection and fulfilment of rights, equity in relation to health and well-being for achieving the goal of health care for all. This is done through guaranteed access to quality health care for all residents of the State, without any catastrophic out-of-pocket expenditure

Note: *The Right to Health is in sync with the constitutional guarantee of the right to life, and other components of the Directive Principles. Under the constitution, no person seeking health care should be denied it, on the grounds of access and affordability.*

– The law provides for a social audit and grievance redressal.

-The Act gives every resident of the State the right to emergency treatment without paying a single paisa to any healthcare institution. The private healthcare institutions providing such facilities will be compensated for the charges incurred.

Read more: [The next step is a constitutional right to health](#)

Why there is opposition to Rajasthan Right to Health Act, 2022?

Narrow professional and commercial interests led to opposition to the law which is ‘good’ in ethical and legal terms.

Not believing in the government’s promise: The protestors were distrustful of the government’s promise of recompense for expenses incurred for treating patients during an emergency.

Further government interference: The Act might pave the way for further government interference in health care.

What are the court’s observations on the right to health?

In 1989, the Supreme Court observed that “every injured citizen brought for medical treatment should instantaneously be given medical aid to preserve life and thereafter the procedural criminal law should be allowed to operate in order to avoid negligent death”.

Read more: [UN declares access to clean, healthy environment as universal human right](#)

What should be done?

Rajasthan government should now work with protestors to gain the trust of the doctors through demonstrable action. Doctors should also work with the government to save human lives.

84. [Safe urban spaces for all shouldn’t be a long haul](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**Safe urban spaces for all shouldn’t be a long haul**” published in the “**mint**” on **30th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population. GS1- Social empowerment

Relevance– Issues related to gender gap

News– The article deals with lack of access to safe and hygienic facilities for women.

What are some statistics related to coverage of Swachh Bharat Mission?

Swachh Bharat was begun on an impressive scale. **Over 100 million toilets** were built across rural India within a span of five years. In 2019, the country was declared “**open defecation free**” (ODF).

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The **Phase II of the mission** started to **sustain behavioral shifts** by focusing on **waste disposal, litter reduction, and stagnant water**. Today, of India's 594,240 villages, 235,708 are declared as "ODF-plus".

How do women face difficulties in access to hygienic facilities and safe spaces?

Women still face not just an acute scarcity of **public urinal facilities in cities**. They also face the risk of **acquiring infections from unhygienic lavatories**. The private set-ups also lack these facilities.

Women who cannot work from home and have less control of their time schedules are more vulnerable.

They face **safety issues** in transport hubs or field-work trips by road, office spaces or institutional premises.

85. Doctors must embrace Right to Health Bill, not protest against it

Source: The post is based on the article "**Doctors must embrace Right to Health Bill, not protest against it**" published in the **Indian Express** on **31st March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Rajasthan Right to Health Act, 2022.

News: The Rajasthan government has recently passed the Right to Health Act. This made Rajasthan the first state in India to pass the Right to Health (RTH) bill. But the doctors in the State are protesting and terming it as a 'draconian law'.

About Rajasthan Right to Health bill

The bill allows free access to outpatient and inpatient services in all government and selected private hospitals in the state.

Must read: [Human life, above all: On the Rajasthan Right to Health Act and the stance of doctors](#)

Why Rajasthan is the ideal state to formulate and implement the Right to Health bill?

Rajasthan is the ideal state to formulate and implement the Right to Health bill because, **a)** In 2022, "[Healthy states, progressive India](#)" report placed Rajasthan in 16th position among 19 big states, **b)** As per the National Family Health Survey -5 (2019-21), the infant mortality rate and the neonatal mortality rate in the state are 30.3 per 1,000 live births and 20.2 per 1,000 live births respectively, **c)** The doctor-population ratio of the state is at an astoundingly low level of five doctors per 10,000 population (in comparison, it is 21 per 10,000 population in Jammu and Kashmir).

What are the expected benefits of the Right to Health bill?

a) Rajasthan's RTH is a legal entitlement for the patient which will prevent many doctors from extracting (not earning) money from patients, **b)** Rajasthan has one of the highest incidences of violence against healthcare professionals in the country. Violence against healthcare professionals is due to mistrust between patients and doctors. The RTH bill will increase trust in the system, and **c)** Ensure doctors work hand-in-hand with the poor and the have-nots.

Why there are oppositions to the Right to health act?

-Assault on private "business model": As per official data, more than 78% of healthcare in India is now delivered by private players. At this juncture, providing free emergency treatment and care will upset the entire private healthcare model foundation.

Doctors' mistrust of the system: This is due to two key reasons **a)** There is no clear definition of what can be classified as a medical emergency, **b)** Bureaucratic and political control to admitting or reimbursing payment for patients. The protest shows doctors' naivety in failing to embrace a historic moment in patient care in this country.

What should be done?

The easiest way to make the society good is to bring equality and justice and this may be at the cost of the physician's ability to earn money. The RTH Bill just aims to achieve that.

86. [For judiciary, the red lines are bright and clear](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**For judiciary, the red lines are bright and clear**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **1st April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Functioning of judiciary

Relevance– Issues related to judicial review and judicial activism

News– Over the last few years, issues relating to tradition, culture and society have come before the constitutional courts of the country in the form of public interest litigation.

What are some facts about doctrine of basic structure and judicial review?

One of the most fundamental principles of **constitutional morality** is that every organ should look at its jurisdiction to discharge a particular role. It is to preserve the **sanctity of the doctrine of separation of powers**.

The doctrine is part of the **basic structure of the Constitution**. It is meant to preserve the **respective power of the legislature, executive and judiciary**.

The judiciary has the **power of review** over the other two organs. But, such power has limitations which must respect the **institutional independence and competence** of such organs.

The power of judicial review is not **judicial supervision or superintendence** over the legislature or executive. This position is especially applicable in matters of policy where **domain expertise** is required. This is also the case with **societal experimentation** where there is a need for a **process of consultation** between the electorate and the elected.

The doctrine of separation of power facilitates **participative democracy in letter and spirit**. It facilitates the **right of the public** to give effect to its will through the legislature.

Even if the decision of the majority is flawed, it cannot be reviewed by the judiciary except on the **grounds of constitutionality**.

What should be the way forward for the judiciary?

Judicial wisdom should not replace the **will of the majority**. The Constitution does not envisage replacing democracy with **judicial paternalism**.

The Constitution recognises that sometimes a good policy decision may be **unconstitutional**, and a bad policy decision may be constitutional. Only unconstitutionality is the ground for the **intervention of the judiciary**.

The judiciary should dissuade public interest litigants and civil society groups from seeking its intervention by crossing **constitutional limits**. In a democracy, those who wish to convince the legislature of their position must engage with **societal and legislative stakeholders** to put across their point of view.

There do exist areas where both the legislature and executive are not taking decisions because of their **vested interests**. It forces the affected parties to seek judicial remedy. In such instances, the Supreme Court may invoke its **extraordinary powers under Article 142** to address an exigency until the legislature brings in a law on the subject. An example of this is the **Vishakha guidelines**.

The judiciary cannot go for **judicial review** merely because the judiciary or some members of the judiciary disagree with the **social premise** underlying the law. State interest can not be questioned based on **judicial disagreement with the legislative or executive position**.

Judicial disagreement with legislative policy is not **proof of unconstitutionality**. Only the constitution is the measure to **assess constitutionality**.

Judiciary should not express its opinion on **matters of policy** where it has no jurisdiction, with the intention of **shaping public opinion** or to put pressure on the other organs. It can have an impact on the **public discourse**.

The Constitution permits the judiciary to perform an **advisory role** in very limited circumstances and that too only when sought for. These **red lines** drawn by the Constitution cannot be breached by any constitutional Court.

87. [India's semiconductor mission might need a compass](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's semiconductor mission might need a compass**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **1st April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian Economy

Relevance– Electronics manufacturing

News– The United States Department of Commerce and its Indian counterpart have recently concluded a memorandum of understanding in March 2023 to ensure that subsidies by each country does not impact India's semiconductor mission.

What are issues with existing institutional structure for semiconductor manufacturing in India?

The **Semi- Conductor Laboratory (SCL)** was set up in Mohali in 1983 by the then central government, with the vision of creating an electronics ecosystem in India.

However, the opening up of markets for consumer goods in 1991 and a fire that broke out in 1989 at the SCL, dashed these hopes.

The facility has not been successful in creating a **domestic semiconductor ecosystem**.

What is the way forward for the semiconductor mission of India?

The **institutional framework** already exists. SCL has been transferred back to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITY), as part of the **new semiconductor policy** announced in December 2021. However, no joint venture partner has been found.

During this period, the focus at MeITY seems aimed at attracting Intel into India to set up a fab. However, Intel primarily operates at <22nm node and 300mm. It requires over **\$10 billion in upgrade cost** to the SCL.

An **alternate approach** could be to leverage **human and capital assets at the SCL** to build on existing base in a targeted manner, by taking advantage of **recent technological breakthroughs** in a class of semiconductors that do not need advanced lithography equipment.

The segment of >180 nm node involves mixed signal analog, wide bandgap (GaN, GaAs, Silicon Carbide) for RF and power markets leveraging existing lithography capability already in place at the SCL.

In this scenario, an investment of \$50--\$100 million may result in the **development of Indian solutions** for automotive electronics, PV-Inverters, 5G infra-power amplifiers, railway electronics.

However, the upgrade has to be backed by **subsidies aimed at fabless design houses** with proven design willing to fabricate at the SCL in the 180 nm+ node.

The subsidies have to be aimed at global design companies with products aimed at **India-specific markets** such as motor drives for BLDC fans or e-bike chargers.

The recent efforts by the **India Semiconductor Mission** to open up subsidies to global small and medium sized enterprises in the **upstream supply chain** are welcome. Existing facilities like the SCL will benefit from this. But this should be coupled with more incentives.

The SCL needs a **full time director** with field experience rather than a career scientist from the Department of Space.

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88. [Lahore Lesson – If Pak HC can scrap sedition law, surely SC can do it](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Lahore Lesson – If Pak HC can scrap sedition law, surely SC can do it**” published in **The Times of India** on **1st April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Relevance: About removing sedition in India.

News: Recently, Lahore High Court has scrapped Pakistan’s sedition law, calling it inconsistent with the country’s constitution. The progressive move should inspire removing sedition in India also.

What is Sedition Law?

Must read: [Sedition Law in India \(Section 124A IPC\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

About the history of Section 124-A

Read here: [Sedition needs a clear definition for it to be retained in law books](#)

About sedition laws in India and Pakistan

The sedition law is a legacy of the colonial penal code for the subcontinent. For example, in the India Penal Code 1860 Section 124A, the section on sedition, was added as an amendment in 1870.

From the very start, Section 124A was used against anti-colonial voices against whom no other charges could be slapped.

Post Independence, this law has been sometimes used to intimidate and silence critics including the opposition, journalists, human rights activists, and even student protesters.

What are the key judgments under the Sedition Law after Independence?

Must read: [Judgements under the Sedition Law](#)

What should be done?

In 2022, the Indian Supreme Court granted the Centre additional time to review the sedition law, telling the Centre to not register fresh FIRs under Section 124A.

Indian government can also consider removing the sedition law in India. As it is often used to punish wrong people for the wrong reasons.

General Studies Paper – 3

General Studies - 3

1. [A sugar rush for emissions – on ethanol blending](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “A sugar rush for emissions” published in **Business Standard** on 6th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 –Environment

Relevance: concerns associated with ethanol production

News: All cars in showrooms have to be E20 compliant from April this year. This means that cars should be able to run with 20 percent ethanol blended petrol.

How much ethanol blending has been achieved by India?

India had already crossed the 10 percent ethanol blended petrol and according to the National Policy on Biofuels, India could hit the 20 percent mark by 2025.

India is the world's fifth-largest producer of ethanol after the US, Brazil, the European Union (EU) and China.

What is the major concern associated with ethanol production and how has the government tried to tackle it?

Ethanol in India is mostly produced from sugarcane. Other crops from which ethanol can also be produced are maize, broken-rice, wheat, etc.

Hence, one of the concerns with ethanol production **from sugarcane is its pricing.**

The government has tried to solve the issue of price by adopting the system of **Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane farmers and that of minimum support price for sugar mills.**

This has become the reason farmers in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra prefer sugarcane to other crops.

This has ultimately led India to surpass Brazil in sugar production in the current sugar season (2022-23) and has become the world's second-largest exporter.

This FRP and MSP model to control prices of ethanol and expect sugarcane farmers and millers to respond with production shifts has worked well.

For example, the year 2021-22 (October-September) saw about 35 lakh tonnes of sugar diverted for ethanol production. This number is expected to reach 60 lakh tonnes by 2025-26.

What are other concerns with ethanol production in India?

Ethanol Production from other crops: The government has plans to offer price support for maize or broken rice. But due to the higher prices in the market, there has been no attempt by the grain-based distilleries to produce ethanol from these two crops.

Stock reserves for Ethanol: Stocking the ethanol crops is another concern because crops like sugarcane or maize production depends on the weather. However, this issue can be solved once the automobiles incorporate a flexi-fuel design that allows the car to run on any combination of ethanol and oil.

Increasing Demand: As per Niti Aayog, the demand for ethanol is expected to increase 1,016 crore litres by 2025. The domestic production of 684 crore litres will have to jump by 48 per cent to achieve this target.

Fiscal Requirement: The government will need more money for FRP and MSP in order to reduce dependence on oil imports.

Read More: [Ethanol Blending of Petrol and its challenges: Explained](#)

What can be the way ahead?

There is a need to come up with an option of storage of ethanol like that of petroleum reserves because a sudden drought could be dangerous to the production.

2. [How to double India's farmers' income](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**How to double India's farmers' income**” published in **The Indian Express** on **6th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Agriculture.

Relevance: Issues related to agriculture policy

Context –On February 28, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi shared his dream of doubling farmers' incomes in the year when India completes 75 years of Independence.

What is the importance of agriculture?

Unless the incomes of farmers go up, **sustained high growth of GDP** is not possible. This is because the manufacturing sector starts facing a **demand constraint** soon after meeting the demand of well-off urban consumers, due to low income of farmers.

Agriculture engages the **largest share of the workforce**. It is 45.55% in 2021-22 as per PLFS. Agriculture also provides **food and nutritional security** to the largest population on this planet.

What are different types of subsidies and support provided by the government to farmers?

Government provides **fertiliser subsidy** whose budget crosses Rs 2 lakh crore. It provides income support to farmers through **PM-Kisan**.

Many small and marginal farmers also get free ration of at least 5 kg/person/month through the **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana**.

There are also **subsidies for crop insurance, credit and irrigation**. States also dole out power subsidies in abundance, especially on irrigation. Even farm machinery for custom hiring centres is being subsidised by many states.

Combined subsidy is about Rs **4 lakh crore per annum**.

What are issues with agriculture policy in India?

Trade and marketing policies adopted by the government are suppressing farmers' incomes. For example, the **ban on exports, the suspension of several commodities from the futures markets, and the imposition of stocking limits** on certain commodities.

These are hidden policy instruments of “**implicit taxation**” of farmers' incomes. This is not a “**pro-farmer approach**”. In fact, the approach is **pro-consumer**. This is the fundamental problem with our policy framework.

The policy of **heavy subsidisation** along with **assured and open-ended procurement** of paddy and wheat is creating challenges for the environment.

What is the way forward to improve agriculture in India?

There is a need to realign farmer support policies keeping in mind **environmental outcomes**. Millets, pulses, oilseeds, and much of horticulture could perhaps be given **carbon credits to incentivise** their cultivation.

Subsidies support should be **crop-neutral**. Even if they need to be skewed, they should be in favour of those crops that are benign to the planet's basic resources.

There is a need for **innovations in technologies, products, institutions and policies** for more diversified high-value agriculture that is also planet friendly.

Increasing productivity through **better seeds and better irrigation** is necessary. It will have to be combined with **unhindered access to the best markets** for their produce.

Diversifying to high-value crops, and even putting solar panels on farmers' fields as a third crop will be needed.

3. [Why India needs a Green Revolution 2.0](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why India needs a Green Revolution 2.0**” published in the **Indian Express** on **6th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country.

Relevance: About the rabi crops and impacts of heatwaves on them.

News: More than the monsoon, it is temperatures that are emerging as a greater source of uncertainty for farmers. The recent rise in heat waves in February and March threatens India's rabi harvests.

Why rabi crops are important for India?

a) The rabi crops are considered assured and immune from rainfall vagaries, **b)** India produces more food grains now during the rabi (winter-spring) than in the kharif (post-monsoon) season. (This highlights the role of irrigation in drought-proofing).

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

What are the vulnerabilities faced by Rabi crops?

Rabi crops were always vulnerable mainly to **shorter winters and the advanced onset of summers**. They are also vulnerable to spring thunderstorms and hail.

The impact of the temperature surge was seen in March 2022, when the wheat crop had just entered its final grain formation and filling stage. The heat stress led to early grain ripening and reduced yields.

Vulnerabilities this year: There is an absence of active western disturbances that bring rain and snowfall over the Himalayas. Currently, both minimum and maximum temperatures are ruling 3-5 degrees Celsius above normal in most wheat-growing areas.

What are the other challenges faced by Indian agriculture?

Climate change isn't the only risk farmers are confronting. They also confront **a)** the prospects for wheat are uncertain, **b)** prices of onion and potato have crashed, **c)** Mustard is trading below its minimum support price with the arrival of the new crop, **d)** edible oil inflation had peaked following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The frequency, volatility and intensity of climate change and crop damages have also increased.

Read more: [Heat alert – No apparent impact, but March weather crucial for wheat](#)

What needs to fast-pace Green Revolution 2.0 to avert the challenges in Indian agriculture?

Green Revolution 2.0 has to be about varieties that can withstand extreme temperature and rainfall variations, while yielding more, using less water and nutrients.

Along with fast pacing, **a)** Farmers, scientists and policymakers have to adapt for the challenges, **b)** Implement better crop planning and market intelligence, **c)** Farmers must know what to plant, how to manage their crops at various stages under different stress scenarios and when to sell.

4. [How to become a green hydrogen superpower](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**How to become a green hydrogen superpower**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

Relevance: Non-fossil sources of energy

News- The 2023 Union Budget has allocated ₹19,700 crore for the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

What is the potential of green hydrogen for India?

India has committed to **50% electricity capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030**. But an **energy transition in industry** is needed at the same time. Most industrial greenhouse gas emissions in India come from steel, cement, fertilizers and petrochemicals.

Green hydrogen can lead to **industrial growth** while simultaneously reducing **industrial emissions**. It can serve as an energy source for heavy industry, long distance mobility, aviation, and power storage. It can also serve as an **energy carrier**.

India is targeting **at least five million tonnes of production by 2030**. This would create demand for **100--25 gigawatts of renewable energy, 60-100 GW of electrolyzers, investment opportunity of ₹8 lakh crore, and cut 50 MMT of annual emissions**.

India has abundant sunshine and significant wind energy resources. It is **geographically blessed** to become one of the **lowest cost producers of green hydrogen**.

What should be the priorities of the government for the success of the mission?

First, domestic demand is critical. If we are not a big player domestically, we cannot be a major player in the international market.

The mission introduces a **Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition fund** for five years, with ₹13,000 crore as direct support to consume green hydrogen. This will encourage heavy industries to increase demand, offering **economies of scale**.

Blending mandates for refineries can be another demand trigger. Urea plants have been exempted.

Another approach is to **leverage government procurement**. India is the second- largest steel producer in the world. Costs of **green steel**, made from **green hydrogen**, are currently much higher.

But, this could be reduced with **economies of scale and changes in production technologies**.

A share of government procurement of steel may be **green steel**.

Second, India can be an **attractive destination for domestic and foreign investment**.

GreenHydrogen production projects in India are far fewer compared to others. Green hydrogen is **difficult and expensive to transport**.

The mission envisions **green hydrogen hubs to consolidate production, end use and exports**.

A **mission secretariat** can ensure project clearance is **streamlined and reduce financial risks**.

Third, the **SIGHT fund offers ₹4,500 crore** to support **electrolyser manufacturing** under the **performance linked incentive scheme**. Currently, manufacturers are importing stacks and assembling them.

India must become **more competitive** with **targeted public funding** in manufacturing the most critical and high value components of electrolyzers in India.

Electrolyser technology must be improved to achieve **higher efficiency goals, specific application requirements**, be able to use non freshwater, and **substitute critical minerals**.

Fourth, establish **bilateral partnerships to develop resilient supply chains**. Globally, about 63 bilateral partnerships have emerged; Germany, South Korea and Japan have the most.

Using yen- or euro denominated loans for sales to Japan or to the EU, could reduce the **cost of capital** and help us become **export competitive**.

Many **bilateral deals** focus on import -export but few deal with **technology transfer or investments**. India must **cooperate with like minded countries** on trade, value chains, research and development, and standards.

The mission allocates **₹400 crore for R&D**, which can be leveraged to **crowd in private capital into technology co-development**.

Indian companies should **consider joint projects** in countries with good renewable energy resources and cheap finance.

Finally, India must coordinate with major economies to develop **rules for a global green hydrogen economy**.

In the absence of **common global frameworks**, rules and standards are being driven by collectives of private corporations rather than through **structured intergovernmental processes**.

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There are already signs of **conflicting regulations and protectionist measures** in major markets. These put India's ambitions at risk.

India's G20 presidency is an opportunity to craft rules for a **global green hydrogen economy**. These rules must address **operational threats, industrial competitiveness and strategic threats**.

India should promote a **global network on green hydrogen** via which companies could **collaborate**.

5. [A new trade strategy: India's performance on exports is a result of policy interventions](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A new trade strategy: India's performance on exports is a result of policy interventions**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Issues related to export policy

News– India's robust export performance has made a **critical contribution to its economic growth** in recent times.

Despite global economic woes, India's overall exports grew at **17.33% to \$641 billion during April-January 2022-23 compared to \$547 billion** during the same period last year.

How has India improved its export performance in recent years?

The country's exports performance was the result of well-crafted trade **policy interventions, their efficacious implementation and a host of other initiatives**.

Export facilitation– It ensured the effective conceptualisation and implementation of export promotion schemes.

These schemes are **Market Access Initiative (MAI), Remission of Duties and Tax on Exported Products (RoDTEP), Trade Infrastructure for Exports Scheme (TIES) and Interest Equalisation Schemes** on pre- and post-shipment rupee export credit.

Production-linked Incentive scheme– It has been a game changer. It has not only transformed India into a **manufacturing hub**. It has also curtailed its **large trade deficit** in electronics and other manufactured goods.

As a result of this scheme, **electronics manufacturing** attracted a massive investment and its exports have grown rapidly by over **55 % annually**. **Exports of mobile phones** alone may reach \$10 billion during the current financial year.

Logistics– it has been a critical stumbling block in India's **exports competitiveness**. It has been proactively addressed in the Union budget 2023-24.

Capital expenditure allocation has been sharply **increased by 33% to a record Rs 10 trillion** on the development of rail, road, air, and ocean infrastructure.

It will make export **logistics efficient**. It will also integrate Indian production systems with **global value chains**.

Restructuring of process– There has been **rationalisation of work allocation** within the Ministry of Commerce and restructuring of its divisions and subordinate offices. It is likely to transform **India's institutional mechanisms to promote exports**.

Adopting the latest technology in the **collection, assimilation, processing of data and making available real-time information** across stakeholders has **bridged the information gap** between the exporters and the various government departments.

Work with state governments– In recent years, the Ministry of Commerce has been actively engaging with state governments and at the district level for **speedy and effective implementation of policy measures** to promote exports.

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Each of the Indian states was asked to prepare an **export promotion strategy**. Proactive involvement of Indian missions abroad helped not only in **market identification** but also in **facilitating product entry**.

Free Trade Agreements– Most Free Trade Agreements signed by India previously became **counterproductive**. The Ministry of Commerce has **re-examined all the FTAs**. It is in the process of engaging in newer ones to benefit India.

Recently, India negotiated **new FTAs with UAE, Mauritius and Australia**. It is in the advanced stages of negotiations with the UK.

It is also actively exploring **new trade agreements with the EU and US**.

6. [‘Hindu rate of growth’ is a phrase we must erase](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**‘Hindu rate of growth’ is a phrase we must erase**” published in **Mint** on **7th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: meaning of the term ‘Hindu rate of growth’ and concern associated with the Indian economy

News: The term ‘Hindu rate of growth’ was recently used by Raghuram Rajan, former governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

What does the term mean and when was it first used?

The term was coined by the economist, **Raj Krishna** in late 1970s. The term refers to a sluggish pace of economic expansion back in the 1980s when the growth of India was under 4%.

Krishna argued that our weak growth back in the 1980s was not on account of a resource or talent deficiency, but **it was the result of a restrictive policy environment**.

According to Krishna, our economy was held back by dismal productivity, an inefficient public sector and a sarkari maze of red tape. However, things changed after the LPG reforms of 1991.

Hence, **Raghuram Rajan used the term in the current economic scenario** which according to him is similar to the 1980s due to low private-sector investment, rising rates of interest and a slowing global economy.

However, there are problems with the phrase and it should not be used.

What are the problems with the phrase?

The term Hindu attached to the phrase may create controversies. **The term nowhere points to religion but suggests a cultural context for poor economic performance.**

Hence, it would be better to delete the phrase as it may hurt the sentiments.

What are the counter arguments to Rajan’s view?

It is true that India is currently facing slow growth. However, after the pandemic, there **has been a V-shaped revival with increased state spending** in the infrastructures. GDP is also expected to increase around 7% in 2023-24.

Hence, there is a need to **attract private investment** for more economic growth and to eliminate the risk of economic slowdown.

7. [Measuring forest cover in India: A doubtful green cover](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A doubtful green cover**” published in the **Indian Express** on **7th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About measuring forest cover in India.

News: The Forest Survey of India’s State of Forest Reports has shown a steady increase in the country’s forests. For instance, the recent report also showed that the country added more than

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1,500 sq km of forest between 2019 and 2021. But, experts have maintained that these reports are not satisfactory indicators of ecological health.

Why increasing forests does not indicate ecological health?

a) Bungalows of ministers and senior officers, the Reserve Bank of India building and parts of the campuses of AIIMS and IIT in Delhi are classified as “forests” in official maps, **b)** The area under plantations have gone up while the country has consistently lost good forests in the past three decades, **c)** In the last 10 years, more than 1,600 square km of forest land has been cleared for infrastructure or industrial projects — nearly a third of this has been diverted in the past three years.

Must read: [Lutyens' bungalows, RBI, encroachments are 'forests' in govt's forest cover map](#)

What are the challenges associated with Compensatory Afforestation Programme (CAP)?

In 2016, the government made that the developers must offset the loss of forests due to developmental projects and initiated the Compensatory Afforestation Programme (CAP).

Issues with generated forests: The programme follows a **plantation-centred approach** means that compensatory afforestation takes place in discontinuous patches — the new green tracts are a far cry from the dense forests they are meant to replace.

Plantations cannot replace forests: Plantations are mostly monocultures that are no substitute for biodiverse ecosystems. They are susceptible to fires, pests and epidemics and often act as a barrier to natural forest regeneration.

Underutilised funds: The investigation shows that large sums of money deposited in the afforestation fund are lying unused.

Read more: [States fall short of target to improve forest cover, quality](#)

Why India needs to properly measure India's forest cover?

Properly assess afforestation: The ambiguities and grey areas in measuring forest could prevent India's afforestation programme from achieving its potential.

Fulfilling India's commitment: India has committed to creating an additional sink of 2.5 billion to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by increasing its forest cover. To fulfil that, India has to increase its forest cover by about 25 million hectares in the next seven years.

The government needs to be more transparent in the way it maps the country's forests.

8. [About internal labour migration issues: Migrants Are All Of Us](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles “**Migrants Are All Of Us**” published in **The Times of India** on **7th March 2023**.

“**Tamil Nadu migrant scare: A thin line between nativism and chauvinism**” published in the **Indian Express** on **7th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Employment and GS-1 – Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

Relevance: About internal labour migration issues.

News: Recently, a fake video surfaced in Tamil Nadu containing visuals of migrant workers being attacked by the locals.

About labour migration issues in colonial India

The colonial government never wanted to extend to British India the labour legislations prevailing in the UK. Indentured labour were ‘freely’ kidnapped away from India to several other British-ruled areas including Fiji, Mauritius, West Indies and in Africa. The Indian Penal Code actually provided punishment for workers who escaped servitude.

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When the case of indentured labour and their forced migration came to the notice, the Royal Commission of Labour commissioned a study. But the colonial government did nothing to safeguard the interests of migrant labour.

What are the protections available for migrant labour at the global level?

ILO at its 21st session adopted the **Migration for Employment Convention, 1939**. In 1975, there was the 143rd convention concerning **Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers**. **Recommendation 151** also dealt with migrant workers.

However, all these recommendations were only concerned with the migration of workmen **from one country to another country**.

How did the government frame policies to tackle internal labour migration issues so far?

After the reorganisation of states on a linguistic basis, different states began to have their own labour legislations.

The government enacted the **Interstate Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979**. The Act defined an inter-state migrant workman as “any person who is recruited by or through a contractor in one state under an agreement or other arrangement for employment in an establishment in another state, whether with or without the knowledge of the principal employer in relation to such establishment.” Supreme Court also in 1984 said that the Act was enacted to eliminate abuses by the contractors, sardars or khatedars.

Why internal labour migration is essential for India?

a) Migrant workers are the backbone of the Indian economy: No region or sector is immune to dependency on them, **b)** The internal migration offers a competitive environment for manufacturing especially the availability of cheap labour. Hence, any threat to the migration pattern can potentially upset the economic equilibrium in the states like Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra.

What are the challenges in addressing internal labour migration issues in India?

a) Indian labour laws are almost a century old, **b)** The problem of internal migrant labour was dealt with only along with the general problems of other workmen in the state, **c)** In most sectors like coal, steel, docks and plantations the issue was not dealt with.

What are the vulnerabilities faced by internally migrated labours?

a) Easy for local police to make allegations against strangers, **b)** The respective state governments can frame reservation laws for locals in educational institutions and in employment. For instance, the Karnataka government has framed legislation, **c)** Locals might complain that the migrant labourers have displaced them in many local employments, **d)** There are other issues like shelter, civic rights, right to get civic amenities, **e)** Subnational groups have also stepped up a campaign against the “northern invasion” and **f)** People from the scheduled areas go to other states and lose their status as a Scheduled Tribe.

What should be done to protect the internally migrated labours?

The problems faced by inter-state migrant labour cannot be addressed only through labour legislation. However, Parliament has to consider special legislation that deals with all aspects of migrant workers' rights including their security and civic rights and not just the labour issues. A thin line separates nativism and chauvinism, which can be breached at any time. The political parties need to ensure that this doesn't happen for political gains.

9. [Industrial policy learnings from a Soviet model versus Japanese](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “[Industrial policy learnings from a Soviet model versus Japanese](#)” published in **The Indian Express** on **10th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

Relevance– Different models for industrial growth

News– The governments of most of the economically advanced countries are now pivoting towards more **interventionist policy**. They are promoting investments in preferred sectors through a combination of **domestic subsidies as well as import tariffs**.

What are arguments in support of policy interventions by the government in the economy?
First, the desire to build some element of **strategic autonomy** in a more **geopolitically fragile world**.

Second, the need to help in **rapid transition to a green economy** before climate change does more damage.

Third, the attempt to **reduce dependence** on a single supplier or a single source of export demand.

What were the debates related to the development model to be followed by India after independence?

Early Indian nationalists of all hues agreed that the **state** should play an **active role in driving economic development** after independence. Though there were differences in the details.

In 1950, the two most important models to follow were those of **Japan and the Soviet Union**. India ultimately adopted the **Soviet model**. It was based on **Mahalanobis’ strategy**.

Why do some economists argue that India should have adopted the development path chosen by Japan after the Meiji Restoration in 1868?

Japan at the time of the **Meiji Restoration** had crucial features that made it the **best economic model** for India.

Japan had focused on **higher farm productivity, the rapid expansion of primary education, and an early focus on export markets to accelerate industrial expansion**. By the 1920s, Japan was in the ranks of the **world’s industrialized countries**.

India’s **First Five-Year Plan** also mentioned the **Japanese experience** as a way forward. Even Jawaharlal Nehru saw the benefits of the Japanese strategy,

The **Mumbai economists** C.N. Vakil and P.R. Brahmananda were critical of **Nehru-Mahalanobis strategy**. They argued that India should focus its **development strategy** on the **production of wage goods rather than heavy industry**, like what the Japanese did.

How was the Japanese development strategy different from the one that the Soviet Union followed in three ways?

Japan built **industrial capacity** with **private rather than public investment**. The sectoral focus was on **light rather than heavy industry**. **Rapid productivity growth** on small farms owned by families released female workers for industrial work.

Since all industrial progress in Japan has been achieved in comparatively recent years, it offers India the most direct and **valuable lessons in reconstruction**.

What are arguments against the wage goods model?

While the **wage goods model** outperforms the Mahalanobis model in the short run, the growth rates converge over a longer period of 40 years.

This is under the unrealistic assumption of a very **high initial savings rate**. With more **realistic savings** at the beginning, the Mahalanobis model actually **outperforms the wage goods model**.

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10. The ideal track to run India's logistics system

Source: The post is based on the article **"The ideal track to run India's logistics system"** published in **The Hindu** on **10th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure

Relevance: concerns associated with the railway's logistics services

News: The Union Budget 2023 has doubled the **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan** to States from ₹5,000 crore to ₹10,000 crore, and has announced an outlay of ₹2.4 lakh crore for the Indian Railways.

This will help Railways to play an important role in enabling a coordinated and integrated logistics system.

What is the preferable mode of logistic transport in India at the present?

At present, **65% of freight movement is done by road transport** due to the convenience roads offer for logistic movements.

However, this has also increased the burden on roads with increased pollution and high logistic costs (almost twice that of railways).

Therefore, it is necessary to adopt railways as a mode for cargo movement. **This will improve India's logistics competitiveness.**

How are the Indian Railways' logistics services compared with the world?

Globally, countries are heavily investing in advanced rail infrastructure for quick and low-cost container movement.

For example, China uses special trains to carry containers that connect significant ports and has dedicated rail lines to move container traffic and planned double-decker container carriages for greater efficiency.

The **Indian Railways are also upgrading their infrastructure through the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan**. However, **these are significantly lower than other countries such as the United States and China.**

What are the problems faced by the Railways in its freight services?

First, the increased transit time by rail and pre-movement and post-movement procedural delays freight movement by rail.

Second, the railways also lack necessary terminal infrastructure, maintenance of good sheds and warehouses, and uncertain supply of wagons.

Third, the **absence of integrated first and last-mile connectivity** by rail increases the chances of damage due to multiple handling and also increases the inventory holding cost.

What can be done to improve freight service by the Railways?

First, it needs to improve infrastructure with proper policy tools.

Second, private participation in the operation and management of terminals, containers, and warehouses can be encouraged.

Third, a special entity can be established under the railways to handle intermodal logistics in partnership with the private sector. This will help in **addressing the first and last-mile issue faced by the railways.**

The entity could function as a single window for customers for cargo movement and payment transactions.

Fourth, the railways can introduce an **Uber-like model** for one of the two cargo wagons, attached to each passenger train. This will enable customers to book the wagon using an online application.

This could directly increase freight traffic without any additional investment in infrastructure.

11. [Can the cheetahs help India's grasslands?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Can the cheetahs help India's grasslands?” published in **The Hindu** on **10th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: concerns associated with the re-introduction of cheetahs in India

News: Government is trying to re-introduce cheetahs in India by bringing them from Namibia and South Africa.

Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park has been chosen as the site for the re-introduction of cheetahs. The article discusses the several aspects of survival of cheetahs in India.

How long will it take for cheetahs to adapt in the Indian climate?

Cheetahs have come from a very different terrain to India. Therefore, it might take time to adapt in the Indian climate.

Moreover, it is not only the adaptation to climate that will determine the success of reintroduction of cheetahs to India.

The **factors such as reproduction and a self-sustaining population** also plays a role in determining the survival of cheetahs in India.

Further, **Cheetah Action Plan states** that in 15 years the project will be considered a success if Kuno reaches an established population of 21 adults.

Can the reintroduction of cheetahs help in improving India's grasslands?

India doesn't have vast savannah grasslands like Africa from where the cheetahs are coming. There are **only six or seven savannah types of grasslands** present in India.

Therefore, the healthier population of cheetahs will indicate improving grasslands in India because they mostly prefer to prey in these grasslands.

However, **it will take 30-40 years for the cheetah to reach a population of 20-40 animals**. Therefore, it becomes difficult to say that Indian grasslands will improve with the re-introduction of cheetahs in India.

Will re-introduction of cheetahs contribute to the development of a larger ecosystem?

As it has been seen in the case of tigers, there has been a remarkable increase in the tiger reserves from 9 to 53. Therefore, it is expected that reintroduction of cheetahs will also help in the improvement of the ecosystem.

However, when we look at the animal's habitat, it becomes difficult to say that it will improve the ecosystem because **cheetahs are the weakest of the large cats**.

They exist at low densities of less than one per 100 sq km. 8-10 cheetahs can be hosted in an area of 750 sq km which is a smaller number.

Therefore, it is not feasible to say that re-introduction cheetahs will help in the development of a larger ecosystem.

Moreover, the government is planning to promote eco-tourism with the re-introduction of cheetahs.

Is it feasible to promote ecotourism and conservation together?

Eco-tourism along with conservation can be promoted. However, there is also a need to address the challenge associated with it because there have been experiences that people over do it.

Ecotourism helps in generating employment for the locals, but **any tourism plan must be community driven**.

12. Old Pension System will take from the poor and give to the rich

Source– The post is based on the article “**Old Pension System will take from the poor and give to the rich**” published in **The Indian Express** on **10th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Issues related to public finances

News– Recently, the return to the Old Pension System has been proposed by sections.

What are some facts about OPS and NPS?

OPS is a “**pay-as-you-go**” scheme. The contributions of current government employees are used to fund the **pension liabilities** of past government employees. In OPS, the employees are guaranteed an amount equivalent to 50% of their last salary in perpetuity.

NPS was established by the NDA government in 2003. It is a **defined contribution scheme**. The employees invest a certain fraction of their salary that is complemented by a contribution from the government.

What are the arguments against OPS?

It will have **fiscal implications**. The only way the OPS can be made sustainable is by either having more government employees or by more borrowing. More employees will lead to **inefficiency in governance**.

States’ finances will be crippled under the pension burden. A recently released report by the Reserve Bank of India on states’ finances provides a detailed breakdown of states’ expenditures on pensions.

In Rajasthan, the state’s expenditure on pensions as a percentage of its own tax revenues is **28%**. In contrast, for example, **In Maharashtra**, the same percentage is **14%**.

States will have to **cut down their expenses**. Expenses on health, education, and other long-term assets will naturally be the first ones to go.

The losers will be the majority of poor people who will be denied **basic services and support from the state**. The winners will be the minority of wealthy government employees.

This is a rare example of a policy that explicitly **takes away the wealth of the poor to distribute it to the rich**. The retiring government employees are amongst the **top 5% of income earners in India**.

Finally, **the sixth and the seventh pay commissions** revised the salaries of government employees upwards assuming that they would be under NPS. Therefore, any switch to OPS now is a **breach of trust of all citizens**.

How can OPS make political sense?

There can be two explanations. One benign, and one disturbing.

Benign explanation– Freebies are not mutually exclusive. Parties desperate to win elections are **promising everything to everyone**. In the short run, they may even fulfil their promise. Finally, they will cut down on expenditures such as defence, healthcare.

If the **current dispensation** at the Centre is re-elected, opposition parties will inherit an even **better fiscal situation** when they eventually come back to power.

Parties may also have **miscalculated the political costs and benefits of OPS**.

Disturbing explanation– The Opposition has realised that the main obstacle in its quest for power at the Centre is the **last-mile delivery of welfare schemes**.

The success of these schemes eventually rests on the ability of the lowest layer of government employees to deliver these schemes. OPS may **incentivise government employees** to **sabotage** these welfare schemes.

13. [About improving financial inclusion: Breaking barriers, building inclusion](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Breaking barriers, building inclusion**” published in the **Business Standard** on **10th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Relevance: About improving financial inclusion.

News: According to the latest Findex Report by the World Bank, around one-third of adults still lack access to formal financial services. It means approximately 1.7 billion people worldwide are unbanked.

About the potential of financial inclusion

-Financial inclusion has been linked to up to 14% growth in the gross domestic product in developing economies.

-Women affected disproportionately: Only 47% of women hold a bank account, as opposed to 55 per cent of men.

-Financial inclusion and a sustainable digital economy are two critical components of achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reducing poverty.

What are the critical challenges while developing financial inclusion?

a) Ensuring digital identity systems might infringe on individuals’ privacy rights, **b)** Digital banking systems might not be fair and inclusive to all income or socio-economic status groups, **c)** Promoting a digital public good which can be sustainable and accessible is also a challenge.

Read more: [How to boost financial inclusion](#)

How India’s G-20 presidency helps in improving financial inclusion?

Firstly, the theme of India’s G20 Presidency, “Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam,” underlines the message of equitable growth and a shared future for all.

Secondly, the G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion working group met in Hyderabad under the grouping’s **Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (GPFI) initiative**.

Note: *The GPFI aims to advance financial inclusion as an essential enabler for reducing poverty and promoting economic growth, potentially improving people’s lives worldwide. This initiative works closely with other international organisations.*

Thirdly, the **G20 Financial Inclusion Action Plan (FIAP)** aims to prevent future economic crises by encouraging conditions that promote its objectives of financial inclusion and stability. Four major drivers have been highlighted in the new G20 FIAP to lay the groundwork for further progress toward financial inclusion.

These are, **a)** the acceptance of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development as a worldwide framework for sustainable development, **b)** rapid development and penetration of digital breakthroughs, **c)** greater emphasis on underprivileged populations’, and **d)** mainstreaming financial inclusion.

Read more: [Financial inclusion is integral to holistic development](#)

What should be done for improving financial inclusion?

A **multifaceted strategy is needed** to create an inclusive and sustainable digital economy.

Focus on digital identification, banking, payments, and regulation: This will provide opportunities to enhance global economic stability and streamline service delivery. Digital banking should focus on promoting stability, transparency, fairness, inclusivity, and interoperability.

Focus on Digital identity systems: These include India’s Aadhaar and national ID schemes in Morocco and the Philippines. These systems help to streamline the delivery of services and payments.

Create a digital stability board: This will aid in advancing digital regulation by supporting better data-sharing legislation and data management for individuals and small- and medium-sized businesses.

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Adaptation of laws and institutions to the digital revolution: Adaptation is required especially in areas such as competition policy, regulatory regimes, innovation ecosystems, workforce development, social protection frameworks, and tax policies.

Promote sustainability and inclusivity in the digital economy: These can be done by **a)** establishing a supportive and enabling e-commerce environment, **b)** developing inclusive digital infrastructure, **c)** adapting policies and institutions to digital transformation, **d)** harnessing digital transformation inclusively, and **e)** using digital public goods.

Make financial inclusion a top priority for G20 countries: The G20 working group should consider strategies to strengthen the financial system's foundation, facilitate remittance flows, and lower the price of remittance transfers.

Along with the above measures, global nations should also focus on collaborating with international organisations to unlock the potential of millions of individuals and communities and foster sustainable, inclusive economic growth.

14. Crypto under PMLA: New rules of the game

Source– The post is based on the article “**Belated, but essential**” published in “**The Hindu**” and **Crypto under PMLA: New rules of the game**” published in “**The Indian Express**” and “**GoI Is Less Cryptic**” published in “**The Times of India**” on 11th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– Issues related to financial and banking system

News– The government has mandated that a host of trading activities in crypto assets will now come under the ambit of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

What are some major points related to government decisions?

Trading between cryptocurrencies and fiat currencies or among cryptocurrencies and other such services can be investigated by agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Income Tax department.

It puts the **onus of ascertaining the provenance** of all activity in such assets upon individuals and businesses participating in or facilitating these transactions.

What has been the approach of the Indian government on virtual currencies?

The government has decided to not accept cryptocurrencies as “currencies”. It treats them as **virtual digital assets**.

India's regulatory framework is **consistently evolving** for crypto assets.

Prior to Parliament's winter session of 2021, GoI indicated that a bill to **regulate crypto assets** would be tabled. However, a bill was never introduced.

In April 2022, the government introduced a **30% income tax on gains** made from cryptocurrencies.

In July 2022, the government brought in rules regarding **1% tax deducted at source** on cryptocurrency.

GoI also acknowledges the limitation of having a **standalone domestic regulation** for virtual assets. In February, GoI informed Parliament that crypto assets are **not confined by national boundaries**.

Regulation will be effective only if there's **international collaboration** on evolving a **common regulatory framework**. Therefore, India is **utilising the G20 platform** to catalyse a **common framework**.

RBI has consistently advocated for a **ban on virtual currencies**. It had asked financial intermediaries it regulates to **follow KYC norms** and other relevant standards for remittances following transactions in crypto assets.

What are the challenges associated with virtual currencies?

They are designed to **bypass the financial system and existing regulation**. Their **anonymous character** makes them effective. But these characteristics also throw up several risks for any economy.

Due to absence of regulation, they can evade **minimum prudential norms such as Know-Your-Customer regimes, Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) rules** etc.

There is the question of **monetary sovereignty**. These private currencies are often **pegged to the US dollar**. They can replace the Indian rupee and lead to **greater “dollarisation” of the Indian economy** even as the monetary and fiscal authorities lose control.

FATF has been continuously flagging the potential that virtual digital assets have for **criminal misuse** due to their **speed and anonymity**.

A few countries have moved to regulate virtual assets, and some others have banned them outright, while a majority have not taken any action. It has created a **global system with loopholes for criminals and terrorists**.

Why should the Indian government be proactive in dealing with virtual currencies?

Volume of trade in unregulated virtual assets has grown significantly in recent years.

The **Enforcement Directorate** is investigating several cases related to cryptocurrency frauds wherein a **few crypto exchanges** had been found involved in **money laundering, ₹936 crore** had been attached or frozen as on January 31 for linkages with proceeds of crime.

A **July 2021 online report by [BrokerChooser.com](https://www.brokerchooser.com)** had estimated India as being the country with the **highest number of ‘crypto owners’, at 10.07 crore**. It was more than threefold the number of owners of crypto assets in the second ranked U.S.

What should be the approach of the Indian government towards virtual currencies?

The government must at the earliest decide on a **full-time regulator** for this sector and not leave entities trading in cryptocurrencies at the **mercy of investigative agencies** alone.

15. [A moment of reckoning for AUKUS and Australia](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A moment of reckoning for AUKUS and Australia**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- International relations

Relevance– Important development impacting the geopolitics around world

News– An announcement about an “optimal pathway” for AUKUS is on the horizon. It has implications for Australia’s plans to operate a fleet of nuclear powered submarines within the next decade.

What are options before the UK?

The first is for the U.S. to build **nuclear powered attack submarines** for Australia. But many U.S. policymakers seem sceptical about this option.

The US is also facing problems with **nuclear submarine construction**. So, the possibility of the U.S. building SSNs for Australia appears rather remote.

The second option is for the U.K. to expand its **Astute- class programme** to Australia. But it is not without challenges.

The U.K. is constructing its **Dreadnought Class ballistic missile submarine programme** while designing the Astute-class replacement in a sequential build process.

Even if Australia acquired an Astute-class submarine, integrating the **onboard combat system** would be difficult due to differences between the current Australian and American fleets.

The third and perhaps most likely option is a trilateral effort to develop a **new nuclear submarine design**.

Canberra could announce a modified version of the yet to be launched **U.S. Next -Generation Attack Submarine** or **U.K. Submersible Ship Nuclear Replacement programmes**, or even a completely **new AUKUS- class design** to be acquired by all three Countries.

What are the challenges before Australia in getting SSBNs from the UK and US?

Australia must find ways to get around **U.S. export controls**. U.S.'s **stringent export control and protocol regime** could jeopardise the **technology transfer agreement**.

To operationalise the pact, the only way forward is to reform the U.S. export control regime by creating a **"carve-out" of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR)**. This is not easy.

Many of its regional partners oppose the Royal Australian Navy **operating nuclear attack submarines**. Some, such as Indonesia, have been open about their reservations.

Others, such as India, despite being **politically supportive of AUKUS**, appear conflicted about the prospect of these submarines operating in the **regional littorals**.

How developments related to AUKUS have implications for?

Even with its closest allies, the U.S. is facing **difficulties in transferring technology**. It is not that Washington does not want to help a partner. But the **U.S. export control system** is so rigid. Acquiring **critical technology** from the U.S. remains a daunting task.

The other lesson is that nuclear technology is difficult under the international system. For Australia to operate nuclear powered submarines, it will have to exploit a loophole.

The loophole allows non-nuclear weapon countries **to withdraw the fissile material** required for submarine reactors from the **IAEA Monitored stockpile**.

The removal could set a dangerous precedent by allowing **potential proliferators** to use naval reactors as a **cover for future nuclear weapons development**.

Acquiring nuclear propulsion technology is likely to be also complicated for India. It is not a party to the **Non- Proliferation Treaty**.

The complexities involved in the **transfer of technology for HEU fueled reactors in nuclear attack submarines** from the U.S. and U.K. leave India with only one practical option. It is buying a **high-power reactor from France**.

The **miniaturised low enriched uranium (LEU) reactor core** for SSNs is a workable alternative. But, it has its own limitations in terms of Indian dependence on France for **reactor fuel** and the need for **periodic refuelling**.

16. Let's talk about crime – on Cyber Crimes

Source: The post is based on the article **"Let's talk about crime"** published in **Business Standard** on **11th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Cyber Security

Relevance: Cyber-crimes and measures to prevent them

News: The article discusses the increasing cyber-crimes and measures to deal with it.

How do cyber-crimes possess threats to people?

The incident of cybercrimes has increased with the time and the digitalization has further given the advantage to the scammers.

Scammers usually pretend to be from a **bank or a fintech company and ask for information from the account holders**. They have also developed **fake apps/websites** that look like real bank apps/websites.

So, multiple ways are being adopted to trap people in the scam and those who get trapped in the scam end up losing money.

Moreover, it is also **not easy to trace the scammers** because they disappear without leaving a trace. The process of **filing a cyber-crime complaint is also difficult for non-tech people**.

What can be done to prevent cyber-crimes by the Financial Institutions?

First, they need to **spread awareness** and talk about the issue to the general public.

Second, they should take several measures to publicise the issue. **For example**, everyone opening a new bank account should receive mandatory warnings about not getting trapped into the scam.

They should also **message regularly on social media** about the common scams and how to avoid them.

Third, Financial institutions need to **lobby authorities to make it easier** to file cybercrime complaints.

Fourth, they also need to explore ways to make it more difficult for criminals to scam people.

17. Dump This Practice – Kochi garbage fire is a warning to all cities

Source: The post is based on the article “**Dump This Practice – Kochi garbage fire is a warning to all cities**” published in **The Times of India** on **11th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3 – Environmental pollution and degradation.

Relevance: About Kochi garbage fire.

News: Kochi became clouded in toxic fumes after the Brahmapuram dumpyard caught fire recently. The Kochi garbage fire made many people in close vicinity to shift out temporarily. The winds carried noxious dioxins and furans inside faraway homes.

What is the reason behind Kochi garbage fire incident?

The waste treatment plant has been operating without a licence since 2016. This is because, they kept failing at various mandated benchmarks, from plastic waste segregation to bio-mining of legacy waste. Since it is the only dump yard in Kochi, the debris kept rising.

Read more: [New e-waste rules and India's e-waste challenge – Explained, pointwise](#)

What Kochi garbage fire incident highlights about India's waste treatment plants?

Kochi garbage fire incident is a **familiar occurrence across the country**. Unsanitary mixed waste dumps are regularly leaking serious health hazards into the air, whether it is the Adharwadi and Deonar landfills in Maharashtra or the massive garbage mountains in Ghazipur, Okhla and Bhalswa in Delhi.

Municipal bodies have less accountability for waste treatment. Hence, the waste turns into totally unsustainable ones.

Must read: [Waste Management in India: Status, Challenges and Solutions – Explained, pointwise](#)

More urbanisation is generating more waste daily. **Scientific management of waste** will be the backbone of India's cities.

18. Remove the value cap on exports by courier for an SME trade boom

Source: The post is based on the article “**Remove the value cap on exports by courier for an SME trade boom**” published in **Mint** on **13th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: concerns with export sector in India

News: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted that India will be the world's fourth largest economy by 2027 with a GDP of about \$5.53 trillion.

The article highlights the measures required in the export sector to reach this target.

What are some measures taken by India to support growth and trade?

Measures taken by India are – **a)** GST, **b)** production-linked incentive program, **c)** PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan for Multi-modal Connectivity and the National Logistics Policy of 2022, **d)** various trade agreements, **e)** onboarding small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to digital platforms.

These are some of the steps taken by India to increase its export and its integration in global value chains.

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However, despite these efforts challenges still exist with India's export sector.

What are the challenges associated with exports?

India's share in global exports is **less than 2%** and the country is struggling to meet export targets of \$1 trillion of goods and services each by 2030.

This is because of certain restrictions faced by SME exporters. **SME exporters lack integration in global value chains, and they also face barriers while using express delivery services.**

What are the problems with SMEs in using express delivery services?

The express delivery sector is regulated by the **Courier Imports and Exports (Electronics Clearance) Regulation, 2010**. This law makes **India the only country with a value limit of ₹5 lakh on exports of goods through courier/express mode.**

Therefore, high-value shipments are exported through the general cargo mode which causes delays.

This adversely **impacts the ability of SMEs in high-value sectors like** gems and jewelry, handicrafts, electronics and auto component goods to use express delivery services (EDS) at reasonable cost.

Even though there have been significant changes in India's express delivery industry over the 25 years, the value restriction continues.

What can be the way ahead?

First, there is an urgent need to **review the 2010 Courier Imports and Exports (Electronics Clearance) Regulation** and align it with the demands of modernization and with upgraded infrastructure and global best practices.

Second, Indian exporters compete with exporters from countries like Malaysia, Vietnam, China or Thailand in global markets. Therefore, **the limit should be removed, and Indian exporters should be provided a level playing field** with other countries.

Third, the upcoming **Foreign Trade Policy should examine** the adverse implication of value limits on exports through the courier mode and push for their removal.

19. The rise of the ESG regulations

Source- The post is based on the article "The rise of the ESG regulations" published in "The Hindu" on 13th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance- Issues related to corporates

News- Regulators and corporations around the world have embraced the idea that businesses should be measured by their environmental impact, commitment to social issues and the soundness of their corporate governance.

What is the main driver behind this development?

It is the realisation that **environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations** need to be included by investors in a **company's risk profile** in order to accurately assess the enterprise.

How ESG differs from CSR?

Corporate Social Responsibility policy in India mandates corporations to engage in initiatives that contribute to the **welfare of society**. This mandate has been **codified into law**.

The list of qualifying CSR activities is **intentionally broad**. It ranges from supporting the protection of historically important sites to promoting safe drinking water.

ESG regulations, on the other hand, differ in process and impact. The **U.K. Modern Slavery Act**, for example, requires companies to publish the efforts they have taken to identify and analyse the risks of human trafficking, child labour and debt bondage.

How is ESG evolving in India?

India has long had a number of laws and bodies regarding **environmental, social and governance issues**.

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It includes the **Environment Protection Act of 1986**, quasi-judicial organisations such as the **NGT**. Also, a range of labour codes and laws governing employee engagement and corporate governance practices.

New initiatives in India go further. It establishes guidelines that **emphasise monitoring, quantification, and disclosure**, like ESG requirements found in other parts of the world.

SEBI substantially revised the **annual Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR)** required by the 1,000 largest listed companies in India.

As per SEBI, it is aligned with **evolving global standards**. It places **considerable emphasis on quantifiable metrics** to allow companies to engage meaningfully with stakeholders and to enhance **investor decision making**.

Disclosures range from **greenhouse gas emissions to the company's gender and social diversity**.

Further legislations regarding ESG are likely to come, given the increased emphasis by the Indian government on ESG issues.

It can be seen in India's more active role in **global climate forums as well as in specific policy developments**. Such as the announcement in January by the Reserve Bank of India that it would be auctioning ₹80 billion in green bonds.

What are the implications for Indian companies?

Compliance with ESG regulations both originating in India and elsewhere around the world have significantly different challenges than India's CSR regulations.

Compliance by Indian companies with the ESG regulations of the U.S., the U.K., the European Union and elsewhere will be critical. If India is to take full advantage of the **growing decoupling from China and play a more prominent role in global supply chains**.

As Indian companies look to expand their ESG risk management, thorough **due diligence** will play a key role.

It includes looking at company records, interviewing former employees and making discreet visits to observe operations to ensure that they are complying with **international ESG standards**.

Companies that wish to maximise their opportunities in the global economy need to **embrace these new requirements** and adjust them accordingly.

20. A resilient India, but growth pangs for China

Source- The post is based on the article "A resilient India, but growth pangs for China" published in "The Hindu" on 14th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economic Growth and development

Relevance- Issues related to big data

News- The Chinese government has projected a growth target of around 5% in 2023. It is lower than that of last year and even lower than the expected GDP growth for India in 2023.

What are the reasons for low growth in China?

The Chinese economy is in a process of **structural deceleration**.

The **consumption expenditure** is recovering, **external demand** remains weak. The scenario of **future private investment** is weak. There are doubts about the role of the private sector in the Chinese economy and **sentiment among foreign investors** is weak.

The real estate sector is still dragging down growth. Beyond 2023, the government's push for a **structural shift of the Chinese economy** is still on the way.

Over the last few years, **tighter regulatory measures** have been introduced to contain **financial risks** and achieve more **social objectives such as a green economy, food security**.

How is the Chinese economy undergoing transformations?

The Chinese government has recognised that **too high a growth** is no longer possible nor desirable. It only aggravates **financial imbalances**. **Sustainable growth** has become a key concept in China's new economic narrative.

Job security is one of the most important objectives of the **sustainable growth narrative**. It is evident from **higher target for new jobs**, compared to last past years. The need for jobs explains China's recent charm offensive to **retain foreign direct investment** in China as it is an important source of **job creation**.

Comparison between the Indian and Chinese economy?

While India and China may not be **too different in size and population**, growth prospects differ substantially.

China has lowered its GDP target further. In contrast, India **remains resilient**. An acceleration of this pattern is to be expected in the next few years. It will depend on whether **reshuffling of the value chain** continues, pushed by **geopolitics and high costs in China**.

21. [Why local banks are insulated from SVB ripples](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

"Why local banks are insulated from SVB ripples" published in the **Livemint** on **14th March 2023**.

"Bailout or not? – Ad hoc steps to stop banking contagion may have implications" published in the **Business Standard** on **14th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About SVB failure and its impact on India.

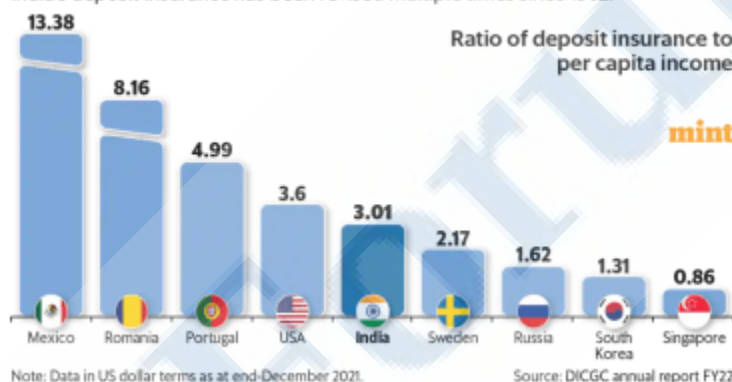
News: The fall of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) has had effects around the world.

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

How did the Indian government respond to bank failures in the past?

Safety net

India's deposit insurance has been revised multiple times since 1962.



SVB Failure

The failure of Laxmi Bank and Palai Central Bank in 1960 prompted the government to introduce the **Deposit Insurance Corporation (DIC) Bill** in 1961 to protect depositors.

In 1968, the Act was amended to widen its ambit to cover cooperative banks.

Deposit insurance started with a sum of ₹1,500, way back in 1962. This was gradually increased to ₹100,000 in 1993 and most recently, to ₹500,000 in 2020. In dollar terms (as of end-December 2021), this comes to 3.01 times India's per capita income. In the US, the deposit cover is 3.6 times of nation's per capita income.

How did the US government respond to the SVB failure and other bank failures?

The US levying a new tax on the banking system to provide guarantees to depositors who were previously guaranteed. Using this, the US government would ensure the safety of depositors' money. However, the equity holders in the bank will lose their shares.

The US Treasury Secretary has also said that no taxpayer funds will be used to bail out SVB. This means the bank and management will not be rescued.

What are the major questions associated with SVB Failure?

In 2018, SVB and other small banks were provided with exemptions from post-crisis banking regulations. To avoid the immediate problem of interest-rate risk, a new facility which lends against collateral valued at par has been introduced. This removed interest-rate risk from the equation for banks.

This new scheme raises the following concerns **a)** Covering all depositors on bank failure is not financially prudent, **b)** With rumours going viral in minutes on social media platforms, delinking interest-rate risk from the banks might create frequent bank runs.

Why India is less impacted by the SVB failure?

This is because of **a)** Tight regulation of banks in India by RBI, **b)** Indian banks largely do not fund startups and hence the impact on the startup world is manageable to a large extent, and **c)** In FY24, banks are at their best shape in decades. For instance, the recent RBI stress tests found that banks would be able to withstand severe stress. It found that even if customers withdraw 15% of uninsured deposits, liquid assets equivalent to 12.2% of total assets would be available.

22. Gati Shakti is the third pillar of our Amrit Kaal growth strategy

Source: The post is based on the article “Gati Shakti is the third pillar of our Amrit Kaal growth strategy” published in **Mint** on **15th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure

Relevance: measures required to boost infrastructure

News: India has taken several steps to improve its infrastructure and boost domestic manufacturing. However, there is also a need to focus on the third pillar.

What is the third pillar of domestic manufacturing?

The first two pillars of domestic manufacturing (**Atmanirbhar Bharat and green growth**) rest on an important third pillar – **ease of movement**.

Ease of movement focuses on creating such infrastructure that will bring down the cost of logistics while also increasing transport efficiency in India.

A reduction in the cost of logistics will make India more competitive internationally. Therefore, along with other measures taken by the government, there is also a need to focus on ease of movement.

What are other measures taken by the government to improve infrastructure?

Increase in Capex: The government has increased its capex from ₹6.03 trillion in 2021-22 to ₹7.3 trillion in 2022-23.

PM Gati Shakti Initiative: The initiative has made India the first country to digitize and make visible whole processes across all ministries.

Budget 2023-24: Budget has focused on 100 crucial infrastructure projects with ₹75,000 crore of total investments.

Multimodal connectivity, digital connectivity and green solutions can be implemented in these projects. This will not only help in reducing the cost of doing business but will also reduce carbon emission in the country.

Further, the government has also **committed its largest ever capex outlay of ₹10 trillion in the Budget**. This has the potential to **attract private investments and reduce the carbon footprint**.

FastTag: The implementation of FastTag for road traffic has brought a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

Funding to States: Budget 2023-24 provides for **concessional funding to states**. This means loans will be provided to states on easy terms to implement crucial projects and achieve their objectives.

This support will ensure that development is spread across various regions of India. This will ultimately create domestic demand along while positioning India as a global manufacturing hub.

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What more can be done to improve infrastructure?

First, there is a need for a **sustained dialogue** with users and private players so that bottlenecks are removed. This can be made more efficient by ensuring data integration through the Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP).

Second, a periodic evaluation of the infrastructure along with implementing digital solutions would lead to optimal utilization of the infrastructure. This would also help the government to reduce its total capex needs.

Third, measures such as **real-time tracking and information on available capacity** will help in the improvement of end-to-end logistics management.

Fourth, there is also a need for **integration and coordination among Indian logistical service suppliers** and the signing up of small service providers. These will enhance the efficiency of the logistics services.

Fifth, outsourcing to third- and fourth-party service providers in India will make PM Gati Shakti more relevant and climate-friendly.

23. [Why do landfills catch fire during summers?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why do landfills catch fire during summers?**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environmental pollution and degradation

Relevance: measures needed to prevent landfill fires

News: The Kochi landfill site caught fire earlier this month. This reminds the Indian cities to be prepared for such incidents in upcoming summer months.

What are the reasons behind the landfill fire?

India's municipalities collect more than 95% of the waste generated in cities but the efficiency of waste-processing is 30-40%. Therefore, unprocessed waste remains in open landfills for long periods of time.

This openly disposed waste includes **flammable material like low-quality plastics, rags and clothes**.

Further, the **biodegradable fraction composts much faster in summers**. This in turn increases the temperature of the disposed wastes beyond 70-80°C. This high temperature along with flammable material makes fire possible in the landfill.

Read More: [Dump This Practice – Kochi garbage fire is a warning to all cities](#)

What can be done to prevent landfill fires?

First, the disposed material can be **completely capped**, and landfills be **closed in a scientific manner**.

However, this solution is **not suitable for India** because the land can't be used again for other purposes and there are also specific operating procedures for the closed landfills.

Second, bioremediation techniques can be adopted to clear the piles of waste. **Automated sieving machines** can be used to segregate the flammable refuse-derived fuel (RDF) (plastics, rags, clothes, etc.) from biodegradable material.

The RDF can be sent to cement kilns as fuel while the bio-soil can be distributed to farmers to enrich soil.

However, implementing a bioremediation project usually takes up to two or three years. Therefore, there is a need for short-term solutions for landfill fires.

What are the short-term solutions available for landfill fire?

The landfill site can be **divided into blocks** depending on the nature of the waste.

Blocks with fresh waste should be separated from blocks with flammable material at each landfill site. The **blocks can be separated using a drain or soil bund** and a layer of soil should cap each block.

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The **most vulnerable part of the landfill** which contains lots of plastics and cloth should be completely capped with soil.

After the division of the landfill into blocks, the landfill operator should classify incoming waste and dispose of it in designated blocks rather than mixing it.

Non-recyclable and non-biodegradable segregated wastes should be sent to cement kilns instead of accumulating them. Dry grass material and dry trees from the site should also be cleared immediately.

These are some short-term measures that can be adopted. However, a permanent and long-term solution is needed.

What can be the long-term solution?

The long-term solution can be adopted by ensuring cities have a systematic waste-processing system where wet and dry waste are processed separately and their byproducts treated accordingly.

24. [Look at AI, not ChatGPT](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Look at AI, not ChatGPT**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **15th March 2023**.

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

Relevance– Issues related to AI

News– Generative AI and its applications like ChatGPT have drawn the attention of the world in recent times.

How does AI show the faultlines of human intelligence?

Act fastly and make mistakes– Microsoft wanted to **capitalise on its early investment**. It added some of those **ChatGPT features** to its search engine, Bing. But this became problematic. It confessed its desire to **hack computers and spread misinformation**. It professed love for a New York Times journalist and compared another reporter to Hitler. It commented on the reporter’s physical features.

In parallel, **Google introduced Bard**. A single mistake in responding to a question about the James Webb Space Telescope led to **\$100 billion in loss of market value** for the company.

Detract from meaningful issues- The **non-serious coverage of ChatGPT in the media** has shown its poor understanding of the AI landscape.

Reporters and commentators may be adding to **public unease** about it. It comes at the cost of **insufficient coverage of more societally meaningful uses of AI**.

This has consequences. **Media narratives** in tech areas drive attention. It leads to **misallocation of scarce resources**.

Health-related AI crossed a major milestone last year. An AI system called **Alphafold** showed that it could predict the structure of almost every protein. This could **open the door to breakthroughs** in the discoveries of medicines. But this was not given coverage like Chat GPT.

Short attention and shorter memories- Yet another limitation of human intelligence is that we have **short memories**. A case in point is the Covid-19 pandemic. The first alert of a mysterious new virus out of Wuhan, came through AI.

At the other end, the search for a vaccine was **accelerated by algorithms**. Researchers got help from AI in understanding the SARS-CoV-2 virus better and **predicting an immune response**. AI was key to determining **clinical trial sites and analysing** the vast amounts of trial data.

Why didn’t Alphafold get media coverage similar to ChatGPT, Bing and Bard?

Its implications are harder for readers to grasp. It hasn’t delivered **immediately usable results**. But, we are programmed to **appreciate the end-products**. The end-products of AI in healthcare take time and require **consistent focus and dedication of resources**.

To make meaningful advances, the predictions must be paired with numerous other approaches. AI algorithms for drug design need **lots of data and** the data must be released from **disparate sources and from different formats** owned by **different institutions**.

25. [Systemic failure – Instability in prices of perishables must be addressed](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Systemic failure – Instability in prices of perishables must be addressed**” published in the **Business Standard** on **15th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the price crash of onions and potatoes.

News: Despite the increasing retail food inflation, the wholesale prices of two key kitchen staples — onions and potatoes — have crashed below their production costs.

This is causing widespread distress among growers. The country’s largest potato-producing state, West Bengal has witnessed farmers’ suicide. Many onion growers in Maharashtra have lit their onion fields on Holika Dahan.

Read more: [Why onion prices have crashed in Lasalgaon wholesale market](#)

What are the reasons for the price crash of onions and potatoes?

The current meltdown in the prices of onions and potatoes seems to be the result of systemic failure. This is because,

Delayed action: The downturn in onion prices began as early as November when the produce from the kharif and late kharif crops began hitting the markets simultaneously. But both the Centre and the state governments chose to wait till February-end.

The limited capacity of state institutions: The Centre asked the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India and the Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium to buy these commodities from major production centres and sell them in large consuming areas. The state governments offered financial sops like income support and transport subsidies. But the limited capacity of these agencies to undertake market-support operations have led farmers to either for distress sale or to destroy their produce.

Inadequate storage facilities: Kharif-grown onions have low storability due to their high moisture content. Further, potatoes have inadequate refrigerated warehousing facilities.

Absence of price-discovery mechanisms: The cold store owners also demand the entire rental charges in advance, fearing that the farmers might not take their stocks back if the prices failed to appreciate.

The absence of price-discovery mechanisms like futures trading or credible market intelligence further aggravates the issue.

Issues with existing price-management instruments: India has price-management instruments like the market intervention scheme and the price-stabilisation fund. But they have failed to serve the desired purpose because of the scarcity of funds, infrastructure, and manpower,

Read more: [The budget spells green-shoot for agri subsectors](#)

What needs to be done to prevent the price crash of agricultural commodities?

India needs to **a)** strengthen critical systemic measures by scaling up their operational capacity, **b)** put in place facilities to foresee the production, demand, and price trends to facilitate timely remedial action, and **c)** improve investments in storage techniques and warehousing capacity for the perishable items produced during specific seasons but in demand round the year.

26. [How to use technology to track crime](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “How to use technology to track crime” published in “The Hindu” on 16th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Security. GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance- Issues related to policing and law & order

News- Recently, a scam happened in Ludhiana. A person posing as the Central Commandant of Crime and Criminal Tracking extracted money from young men. They were issued fake IDs, promised jobs as investigating officers in CCTNS.

What are some facts related to CCTNS?

It includes the **national database of crime and criminals**. It connects police stations. It also **digitise FIR registration, investigation and charge sheets**.

The criminal justice systems should also be **standardised, harmonised and integrated**. Citizens should enjoy the **same level of law and order**, regardless of residence. CCTNS is designed to achieve that.

CCTNS influences the **Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)**.

What are issues with policing in India?

For IPC crimes, **investigation rates** are around 65%. investigation rates vary across the states. It is more than 95% in Gujarat, but just about 45% in Jharkhand.

Charge-sheeting rates also vary widely across states. For IPC crimes, the all-India average is just over 72%. It is over 90% in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala and West Bengal, but less than 40% in Assam.

There are **variations across states in use of CCTNS**. As of January 2022, 97% of police stations have been connected to CCTNS, but the figure is 77% for West Bengal.

There are reasons for this variation among states. **Under-staffing** is one of the reasons.

In 2016, the MHA brought out a **model prison manual**. Many states haven't adopted this and have not updated their **old prison manuals**.

The **agenda of police reforms** has been stuck for years. Nothing much has been achieved through **Model Police Acts**. India is far away from achieving the **principles of one country – “one police” and “one prison”**.

27. [SVB, Signature Bank collapse: What are ‘Too-Big-To-Fail’ banks, and what makes Indian banks safe](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “SVB, Signature Bank collapse: What are ‘Too-Big-To-Fail’ banks, and what makes Indian banks safe” published in the **Indian Express** on **16th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About SVB failure and its impact on India.

News: The fall of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) has had its effects around the world.

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

Why are Indian banks less vulnerable to bank failures?

Read more: [Why local banks are insulated from SVB ripples](#)

This is because **a)** India's domestic banks have a different balance sheet structure, where deposits cannot be withdrawn in bulk quantities like SVB, **b)** Household savings constitute a major part of bank deposits in India. On the other hand, in the US a large portion of bank deposits are from corporates, **c)** A large part of Indian deposits is with public sector banks, and most of the rest is with very strong private sector lenders, **d)** The approach of the regulator has generally been that depositors' money should be protected at any cost, **e)** India have **domestic systemically important banks (D-SIBs)** and **f)** While the Basel-III Norms prescribe a capital

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adequacy ratio (CAR) of 8%, the RBI has mandated a CAR of 9% for scheduled commercial banks and 12% for public sector banks.

About Global-SIBs

Need: 2008 financial crisis highlighted the issues with large and highly interconnected financial institutions in the real economy.

Recommendation: In 2010, the **Financial Stability Board (FSB)** recommended that all member countries should put in place a framework to reduce risks attributable to Systemically Important Financial Institutions (SIFIs) in their jurisdictions.

Further, the Basel, Switzerland-based **Financial Stability Board (FSB)** has identified a list of global systemically important banks (G-SIBs).

G-SIBs at present: There are 30 G-SIBs currently, including JP Morgan, Citibank, HSBC, Bank of America, Bank of China, Barclays, BNP Paribas, Deutsche Bank, and Goldman Sachs. **No Indian bank is on the list.**

Advantages of being SIBs: They are perceived as banks that are **‘Too Big To Fail (TBTF)’**, due to which these banks enjoy certain advantages in the funding markets.

How does the RBI Select D-SIBs in India?

The RBI follows a two-step process to assess the systemic importance of banks.

First, a sample of banks to be assessed for their systemic importance is decided. Banks having a size beyond 2% of GDP will be selected in the sample.

Second, Once the sample of banks is selected, a detailed study to compute their systemic importance is initiated. Based on the study, a composite score of systemic importance is computed for each bank. Banks that have systemic importance above a certain threshold are designated as D-SIBs.

Next, the D-SIBs are segregated into buckets based on their systemic importance scores.

What are the concerns associated with D-SIBs?

D-SIB tag indicates that in case of distress, the government is expected to support these banks. This **a)** encourages risk-taking, **b)** reduces market discipline, **c)** creates competitive distortions, and **d)** increases the probability of distress in the future.

So the RBI recommended that the SIBs should be subjected to additional policy measures to guard against systemic risks and moral hazard issues

28. [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?

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

29. [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.

30. [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.

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.

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31. [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-paced 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.

32. [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.

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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.

33. 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.

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](#)

34. [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**.

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](#)

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

Source: The post is based on the article **"Understanding waste-to-energy plants"** published in **The Hindu** on **22nd March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: problems with Waste to Energy Plants

News: The Kerala government recently announced the State's first waste-to-energy project in Kozhikode. The planned facility is expected to be built in two years and generate about 6 MW of power.

What do waste-to-energy projects do?

These projects use non-recyclable dry waste to generate electricity and in turn increase the State's power generation capacity and **ease the solid waste management (SWM) burden**.

These plants use non-biodegradable waste to generate power. The waste is combusted to generate heat, which is converted into electricity.

Why is it needed in Kozhikode?

Kozhikode has a population of about 6.3 lakh and generates approximately 300 tones per day (TPD) of waste. Of this, around 205 TPD is biodegradable and 95 TPD is non-biodegradable.

Out of the 95 TPD non-biodegradable waste, only about 5 TPD is recycled. Therefore, the **remaining non-recyclable dry waste could be used to generate power at the waste-to-energy plant.**

What are the concerns associated with non-biodegradable waste required to generate electricity? Solid wastes usually contain 55-60% biodegradable organic waste which gets converted into organic compost. 25-30% are non-biodegradable dry waste and around 15% are silt, stones, and drain waste.

Out of non-biodegradable wastes, **only 2-3%, like hard plastics, metals, and e-waste, is recyclable.** The remaining consists of low-grade plastic, rags, and cloth that can't be recycled.

This part of the non-recyclable dry waste is the most challenging portion of the SWM system. The presence of these materials **also reduces the efficiency of recycling other dry and wet waste.**

What are the challenges with Waste to Energy plants?

Read Here: [Waste to Energy Plants: Benefits and Concerns](#)

What measures can be adopted to overcome these challenges?

First, people need to follow **strict segregation practices** and process biodegradable wastes. **For example**, Kozhikode's projected population and waste generation rate could use around 100 TPD of non-recyclable dry waste to generate power. But this is only possible when people follow proper segregation.

Second, the **municipality must ensure that only non-biodegradable dry waste is sent to the plant** and separately manage the other kinds of waste.

Third, it is also necessary that **biodegradable-waste-processing plants should operate efficiently.** Else, all the waste would be transferred to Waste to Energy Plants which might affect its power generation capacity.

Fourth, Segregation should be **streamlined to ensure the waste coming to the facility has 2,800-3,000 kcal/kg calorific value** for proper generation of electricity.

Fifth, the department responsible for SWM should be practical about the high cost of power generation. Hence, **a tripartite agreement between the municipality, the plant operator, and the power distribution agency might be fruitful.**

36. [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.

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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.

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.

37. 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 operate is unlikely to change.

38. [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.

39. [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.

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.

40. 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**.

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.

41. [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.

42. [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 \(CDP\)](#).

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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.

[43. 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 tofor 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.

44. [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.**

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State Municipal Acts also mandate capture and removal, and they should be **sheltered, rehomed 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**.

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.

45. [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.

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.

46. 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).

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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.

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.

47. 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.

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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.

48. [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](#)

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](#)

49. [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.

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.

50. [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.

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](#)

51. [Banking turmoil in the West has placed India at a fork in the road](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Banking turmoil in the West has placed India at a fork in the road**” published in **Live Mint** on **27th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economy – Money and Banking

Relevance: Impact of US bank crisis on the world

News: The failure of three US banks have shaken the global economic crisis and has reminded the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008. However, the GFC of 2008 is different from the current crisis.

How is the current crisis different from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008?

The problem during the GFC was with the credit risk caused by a surge in banks' bad mortgage loans.

However, the current crisis in US regional banks is due to liquidity risk driven by deposit outflows, and [Silicon Valley Bank's issues](#).

What are different scenarios emerging from the failure of the bank in the US?

Good scenario: In this, the US Federal Reserve manages to address banks' liquidity needs via its new bank term-funding programme and its regular discount window.

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This would prevent other smaller US banks from selling their assets at a loss. This restores confidence, deposit outflows stabilize and bank runs are avoided.

Bad scenario: It would cause a financial crisis leading to a wave of financial shocks. As seen from last year, there have been instances such as tremors in the cryptocurrency market, the UK pension liability-driven investing crisis and now in US and European banks.

However, in either of the scenarios, there will likely be weaker global growth and recession in both the US and Europe.

Why are recessions likely to happen in the US and Europe?

This is because – **a)** monetary policy takes time to be effective and the impact of the last year's tightening policy is yet to fully emerge, **b)** the banking turmoil will further **weaken growth through due to tighter lending standards for the banks** and **c)** these shocks can have **ripple effect leading to high cost of capital** which in turn delay the capex by the firms along with increase in the saving.

What will be the potential impact of the crisis on India?

The crisis in the West for India means – **a)** weaker growth and lower inflation, **b)** slowdown in India's exports and delay in private capital expenditure, **c)** moderate consumer demand due to higher interest rates and increased uncertainty.

It is also expected that India's GDP growth will be moderate at 5-5.5% in 2023-24.

However, the **overall impact on India will be limited because** both financial and corporate sector balance sheets are stronger. India also has enough foreign exchange reserves to manage any capital account outflows.

Read More: [SVB, Signature Bank collapse: What are 'Too-Big-To-Fail' banks, and what makes Indian banks safe](#)

What lies ahead?

The worst inflation is yet to come and therefore, it is necessary for India to create buffers through monetary and fiscal policies.

For monetary policy, a forward-looking approach is needed by assessing the impact of past tightening domestic policy and global spillovers along with increasing scrutiny of macro-economic financial risks.

For fiscal policy, there is a need to prepare for a potential slowdown in growth and tax revenues by curbing non-essential spending so that countercyclical public capital expenditure is maintained.

52. Go, Afspa, Go – Every N-E district freed of this draconian law represents an advance. But it's time to consider full repeal

Source: The post is based on the article “Go, Afspa, Go – Every N-E district freed of this draconian law represents an advance. But it's time to consider full repeal” published in **The Times of India** on 27th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS – 3: Security challenges and their management in border areas.

Relevance: About removal of disturbed area tag.

News: After 2022, the Union home ministry has considerably reduced the number of “disturbed areas” in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. In its recent review, the “disturbed area” tag has been removed from one more district in Nagaland.

About Armed Forces Special Powers Act or AFSPA

Must read: [Armed Forces Special Powers Act or AFSPA](#)

About AFSPA in North East

Read here: [Explained: AFSPA and the Northeast](#)

At present, eight of Nagaland's 16 districts have AFSPA in full force while in five others, AFSPA is imposed in parts. AFSPA was removed from Tripura in 2015, Meghalaya removed it in 2018

after 27 years. The Centre removed AFSPA from 23 districts – plus partially from another district – of Assam's 36 districts last year.

What will be the way forward?

The government has successfully brought militants to surrender, join peace talks and abandon arms. For example, the 2020 Bodo Accord and the 2021 Karbi-Anglong pact have addressed the root causes of insurgencies. With this, the climate is more amenable to the total removal of AFSPA.

53. Is Every Bank Too Big to Fail?

Source: The post is based on the article **“Is Every Bank Too Big to Fail? – US government rescue culture will hurt the global financial system, then growth and living standards everywhere”** published in **The Times of India** on **28th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economy

Relevance: About the US's changing attitude towards rescuing banks and its implications

News: Bank runs in the US have caused global economic shocks and it increases the burden on the government for its rescue. This has been caused by the easy money policy adopted by the US.

What is easy money policy of the US?

In the last few decades, **the easy money policy of the US**, made the US market five times larger than the world economy.

The market in the US was so deeply interconnected that the failure of even a midsize bank had global impacts.

This easy money era was shaped with **low interests and the state's responsibilities to rescue banks** and other economic institutions from crisis.

Even in the present bank runs, the easy money era is being followed. **For instance**, central banks are tightening monetary policy due to the inflation and the government is opting to rescue those which failed.

This rescue mechanism has **turned US from a minimalist state towards maximalist**.

How has America grown from a minimalist state to maximalist?

Before the Civil War: America in **the pre-1929-era was a minimalist state**. In those times, economic rescues adopted by the government were rare and were also not controversial.

America in had limited government intervention and no central bank. Trust in those times was kept at personal level not at institutional level.

During the American Industrial Revolution: Even during the industrial revolution, **the government restrained in intervening into rescuing the economic institutions**. This resulted in strong productivity and higher per capita income growth.

During the 1960s-70s: By this time also, people were against government rescue of the economic institutions.

During the 1980s: **Free market ideology spread worldwide** during this period. It also **saw the rise of rescue cultures**. **Continental Illinois became the first US bank to fail**.

FDIC extended unlimited protection to Continental depositors of the bank just as it recently did for SVB depositors.

During the 1990s: **The first preventive rescue came in the late 1990s**. The Fed organised support for Long Term Capital Management in order to avoid the threat of a systemic financial crisis.

Post-1990s: The US government in 2008 and 2010 attempted a larger rescue. It rescued big Wall Street banks in 2008.

And in 2020, the government took preemptive measures to rescue everyone including individuals and companies of all sizes, including those lacking solid collateral.

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The Fed and Treasury combined spent trillions of dollars in loans and bailouts to thousands of companies across finance and other industries at home and abroad.

What are the implications of adopting maximalism?

Maximalism has led to a **massive misallocation of capital and a surge in the number of zombie firms.**

In the US, **total factor productivity growth fell** from 2% between 1870 and the early 1970s to 0.5% after 2008. This maximalist culture, instead of re-energizing the economy, is destabilizing the global financial system.

Hence, the government intervention eases the pain of crises but over time lowers productivity, economic growth and living standards.

54. [Let satellites terminate patchy internet coverage](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Let satellites terminate patchy internet coverage”** published in **Mint** on **28th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: expanding role of ISRO and digital connectivity

News: The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has recently placed 36 OneWeb satellites in orbit.

What does this signify for India?

The satellites were placed in orbit using LVM-3 as a satellite launch vehicle. This has proved the reliability of the launch vehicle.

Further, **the mission has also earned the reputation for the Indian space agency** globally, because of the lower cost it offered for the mission.

About OneWeb Satellites

Read Here: [ISRO puts 36 OneWeb satellites in orbit](#)

OneWeb plans on launching services in India this July or August. It could extend the internet to parts of the country that either remain deprived of access or suffer poor connectivity.

India must utilize this opportunity and make the internet accessible in the remotest area.

What steps have been taken by India to promote digital connectivity?

The **Digital India Program** is one of the steps towards promoting digitization.

The government is also coming up with a **spectrum policy**. However, concerns such as allocation or auction of airwaves, revenue generation, etc., still remain with the policy.

Whatever be the case, **India would need transparency in its policy** and not let delays arise from indecision. Because it would be unfortunate if other factors held India back from expanding the internet while technology is present.

What is the way ahead?

Even though India has earned a reputation worldwide for launching OneWeb satellites, the **concerns of internet shutdowns in India still remain. For example**, last year, India had more [internet shutdowns](#) than any other country.

Therefore, India must achieve the promise of full access reliability in order to fulfil its digital dreams. **This means that internet connectivity should not be cut unless there is an extreme national emergency.**

55. [Principles underlying tax architecture need wider debate](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Principles underlying tax architecture need wider debate” published in “The Indian Express” on 28th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Government budgeting

Relevance- Issues related to taxation

News- Recently, the Finance Bill 2023 was passed by voice vote in the Lok Sabha last week with 64 amendments.

What is the contentious decision related to amendments?

There was a decision to scrap the **tax benefit for debt mutual funds**. From April 1, investors in debt mutual funds cannot avail the **benefit of indexation** for calculation of **long-term capital gains**.

These investments will now be taxed at income tax rates applicable to an individual's tax slab.

What is the meaning of indexation for calculation of long-term capital gains?

Indexation means adjusting the cost of funds by **taking inflation into consideration**. It is offered to **debt fund investors** if the investment is **redeemed after 36 months**.

In the case of debt funds, long-term capital gains were taxed at 20% with indexation benefits. This benefit brought down an **investor's tax liability**.

What will be the impact of the decision to scrap the tax benefit for debt mutual funds?

There are concerns that the withdrawal of the benefit will affect investors. They will **reassess their allocations** to debt mutual funds. This may impact flows into these funds.

Debt mutual funds channel funds into the bond market. This move may be **detrimental to the growth and development** of the bond market in India.

According to a report by Crisil, **70% of the investment in debt funds** flows from institutional investors. Individual investors accounted for 27%. This will possibly affect flows to the **corporate bond market** and thus demand for corporate debt is likely to be impacted.

The difference between bank deposits and debt funds needs to be considered. Bank deposits are insured up to Rs 5 lakh. Debt mutual funds do carry risk depending on the risk profile of the bonds they hold.

What is the way forward for taxation structure in India?

Capital gains architecture in India needs to be **reexamined and reconfigured**. There are **different rates of taxation for different asset classes**. **Rationalisation of tax rate and the holding period** is desirable.

The principles underlying the tax architecture in India need to be **widely discussed and debated**.

56. [This helicopter programme cannot go into a tailspin](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “This helicopter programme cannot go into a tailspin” published in “The Hindu” on 28th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance: Issues related to defence equipments

News- Recently, Dhruv helicopter in the Indian Navy's newly acquired fleet of ALH Mk-III MRs experienced a sudden loss of power and rapid loss of height near Mumbai.

In another incident on March 26, an Indian Coast Guard ALH Mk-III MR (CG-855) on a test flight, crashed at Cochin International Airport soon after takeoff from the Coast Guard base at the airport.

What is the major cause behind the helicopter accidents?

Majority of accidents related to the ALH fleet have been caused by **critical failure or breakage in the flight control chain**. Therefore, certification of ALH requires a **level of reliability** of these systems.

Yet, there have been at least four or five reported cases of a sudden loss of control on the ALH due to breakages in flight control rods. The Mumbai incident indicates that not enough has been done to fix serious flaws.

Why is there a need for quick action to remove the faults causing helicopter accidents?

The **focus on safety** is a necessity. The fleet cannot remain grounded for long as these helicopters are a lifeline to defence personnel in many remote defence posts. These will now have to be serviced by an ageing Chetak/Cheetah fleet.

Flaws in design, production, quality control or certification may also impact the civil and export potential of the ALH.

There is much more at stake than reputation such as the **safety and longevity of all subsequent derivatives** like the Light Utility Helicopter. More than 300 of these machines form the backbone of the vertical lift service in the Indian military. There has to be a **quick action**.

57. Sterilisation is the best way to address stray dog problem

Source- The post is based on the article “Sterilisation is the best way to address stray dog problem” published in “The Indian Express” on 25th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issues related to stray animals

News- The article explains the challenges associated with mass killing and confinement of stray dogs.

What are statistics related to the number of deaths caused by Rabies in India?

According to the 2021 edition of **National Health Profile**, there were 105 cases of human death from rabies in India in 2019. The 2018 edition put the figure at 97 in 2017.

According to the relevant preceding **annual National Health Profiles**, there were 86 human deaths from rabies in 2016, 113 in 2015, 125 in 2014 and 132 in 2013.

What are arguments against the confining stray dogs in facilities or killing them?

Not in accordance with the Animal Birth Control(ABC) programme- Under the ABC programme, street dogs are picked up from an area, **sterilised and vaccinated against rabies**, and returned to the same area.

They keep **unsterilised and unvaccinated** dogs out. The authorities can concentrate on **sterilising and vaccinating** new areas until all stray dogs in a city or district are covered.

Killing all dogs in an area would enable **unsterilised, unvaccinated dogs** to come in. The authorities will have to **return again and again** to the same area to kill the new arrivals.

Until the **promulgation of the ABC Rules**, the number of stray dogs continued to increase in India despite relentless mass killings.

Huge investment- India will have to invest thousands of crores of rupees to set up **necessary infrastructure** and deploy lakhs of people to catch dogs, operate them and take care of them. Housing and feeding stray dogs permanently in “facilities” will require a **continuous flow of funds**. A huge amount of money will be required for buying injection syringes and lethal drugs for killing, and the safe disposal of bodies.

No evidence in support of killings- Humane euthanasia does not help. As per the **WHO's Expert Committee on Rabies**, there is no evidence that the removal of dogs has a significant impact on dog population densities and the spread of rabies.

Authorities confronted by problems caused by these stray dogs have turned to **mass destruction** in the hope of finding a quick solution. But, it does not resolve the stray dogs problem.

What are other benefits associated with the ABC programme?

The ABC programme reduces cases of dog bites. Sterilised bitches **do not go into heat**. Fights among dogs over bitches don't happen. This fight raises their **aggression levels**.

The **rise in aggression levels** when they are guarding their puppies against threats will be reduced. Many get bitten while **teasing, hitting, or trying** to take away puppies.

58. [Centre has been lifting AFSPA in the Northeast incrementally. This must continue](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Centre has been lifting AFSPA in the Northeast incrementally. This must continue**” published in the **Indian Express** on **28th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3: Security challenges and their management in border areas.

Relevance: About removal of disturbed area tags and insurgencies from North East.

News: The Centre has lifted the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 from more police station limits in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. This is the second time in a year that the Centre has reduced areas under AFSPA in the Northeast. This highlights the reduction of insurgencies from North East.

What are the areas under AFSPA at present?

Read here: [Go, Afspa, Go – Every N-E district freed of this draconian law represents an advance. But it's time to consider full repeal](#)

About Armed Forces Special Powers Act or AFSPA

Must read: [Armed Forces Special Powers Act or AFSPA](#)

About AFSPA in North East

The prevalence of insurgencies is felt in almost all states in the Northeast. For example, the Naga rebellion since the 1940s, the Mizo uprising since the 1960s, radical Left groups in Manipur in the 1970s, and the ULFA in Assam in the 1980s. This necessitated the imposition of the AFSPA. The Army was sent in because the civil administration had failed to control the situation.

Read here: [Explained: AFSPA and the Northeast](#)

How does the government reduce insurgencies from North East?

a) Since the ceasefire with Nagas in 1997, successive governments have pushed for talks with the rebels, **b)** Assam has negotiated with its rebels — Ulfa, Bodo and Dimas groups — despite stray incidents, **c)** The Mizo rebels, who signed a peace accord in 1986 when Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister, joined electoral politics in Mizoram and won office, and **d)** The Tripura government has successfully negotiated the insurgency and got the AFSPA removed in 2015.

What should be done to utilise the reduction in insurgencies from North East?

Recently, the Manipur government had withdrawn the ongoing ceasefire pact with two Kuki militant groups. They were among the 25 Kuki-Chin-Mizo militant groups with which the state had signed a “Suspension of Operations” agreement.

A stable Northeast is extremely important, especially when Myanmar is in crisis. So, the government has to maintain a balance between regional and ethnic identity assertion and nationalism.

59. [Waste Is Winning – Cities’ effluent management is way behind target and a health hazard. Eco-friendly, inexpensive solutions exist](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Waste Is Winning – Cities’ effluent management is way behind target and a health hazard. Eco-friendly, inexpensive solutions exist**” published in **The Times of India** on **28th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3: Pollution.

Relevance: About sewage treatment in India.

News: Recently, nodal pollution body, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has found all 18 drains of Delhi that empty treated wastewater into the Yamuna fall short of chemical standards mandated before any drain reaches the river. It also found that around 22% of Delhi’s untreated waste ends up in Yamuna.

About India's Wastewater generation and sewage treatment capacity

As per a Niti Aayog report, "of 72,368 million litres of urban wastewater that India generates daily, only 28% is treated." That means 72% of wastewater is untreated and "maybe disposed of in rivers/lakes/groundwater".

At least three laws, over 10 government policies and missions are functioning since 1985 to tackle India's wastewater, polluted and dead rivers problems. But still, India is not completely addressed the issue.

What are the contributing factors to poor sewage treatment in India?

Wastewater, and sewage treatment in India is abysmal. This is because **a)** India lacks the legal and political will, **b)** Fewer funds are allocated for sewage treatment, **c)** Limited availability of land in urban areas for sewage treatment plants. Further, residents are also in fear of an economic hit as the odour and aesthetics lower land prices in their area, **d)** The regulations are not strict and there is an absence of an oversight framework, **e)** Lack of civic awareness about the problem, **f)** Due to urbanisation, the influx of migrants into cities has increased manifold and resultant population growth in urban areas and **g)** Illegal dumping, poorly managed drainage systems, multiple leakages, and conventional technology in existing treatment plants are other issues.

All this led to the widening of the gap between sewage treatment capacities and sewage generated.

What should be done to improve sewage treatment in India?

1) Some Chinese cities addressed sewage treatment by building plants underground. This can be done in India as well, **2)** India needs to prioritise waste management before it starts constructing wetlands and urban water bodies, **c)** India should utilise the decentralised wastewater plants as they are an inexpensive and ecologically sustainable way to address the problem.

60. Understanding the street dogs-human conflict

Source– The post is based on the article "Understanding the street dogs-human conflict" published in "The Hindu" on 28th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment – Man- Animal Conflicts

Relevance– Issues related to stray animals

News– There is growing Intolerance against dogs and conflicts between humans and animals are increasing.

What are the reasons behind growing intolerance towards street dogs?

Resident Welfare Associations– They are often the **instigators of violence**. They do not have real power. Power demands that an enemy be identified. So, dogs living there peacefully become the target.

Animal instincts– Dogs get **aggressive** when they perceive a threat. They want to protect themselves or their litter from attacks if they are unwell or hungry.

They become aggressive if they are forcibly relocated, or have witnessed abuse and neglect.

Implementation of rules– The **Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules of 2001** have been **recommended by the WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health** as the only way to bring about a sustained decline in the dog population.

However, necessary measures have not been implemented by local authorities to manage the street dog population.

The **lack of budget and infrastructure, the prevalence of corrupt and inefficient practices, and the absence of transparency and monitoring** are the challenges in implementation.

Fascination for foreign breeds– It is responsible for bad treatment of native breeds. Business of Pet shops thrive due to it.

What are steps taken by the government to regulate foreign breeds?

In 2016, the Central government **prohibited the import of pedigree dogs** into India. In 2017, it notified Rules for strictly regulating dog breeders.

In 2018, following a **recommendation by the Law Commission**, the Pet Shop Rules were notified to prevent the trade of pedigree dogs.

What is the importance of street dogs?

If there is a vacuum created by killings of dogs, it will be occupied by a **more inconvenient species**, such as rats, mice, mongoose and cockroaches.

The **London Plague of 1665** was a result of the killing of 2,50,000 dogs and cats. The mice population grew, and 70% of the human population was wiped out. A similar incident happened in Surat in the near past, when a plague scare was spread as a result of removing dogs.

What is the way forward to reduce the conflicts between humans and dogs?

The **effective strategy** would be the **implementation of the ABC(Animal Birth Control) Programme** by municipal bodies in accordance with the **new ABC Rules of 2023**.

A **proactive approach** would be to **encourage the adoption of Indian dogs**. If one person out of every 100 people adopts a dog from the street, there would be no dogs on the roads.

The **native breeds** of dogs should be promoted. Native dogs have **better immune systems** and make great pets.

The importance of people who look after native dogs on the streets has been recognised by our courts. In the new ABC Rules, community dog caregivers have been granted protection from harassment.

Reports of dog attacks must be tested on the **benchmark of proof**. Recently, it was reported that two children had been killed by dogs in Vasant Kunj in New Delhi. Still, it has not been proven.

61. A disturbing example of the normalisation of lawfare

Source– The post is based on the article “**A disturbing example of the normalisation of lawfare**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **25th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Polity – Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business

Relevance– Issues related to disqualification of representatives

News– Recently, Rahul Gandhi was disqualified from the membership of Lok Sabha after two year imprisonment in defamation case.

What are issues with the court judgement in the defamation case of Rahul Gandhi?

Legal reasoning– The complainant claimed that by virtue of his surname, he and all other people having surname “Modi” had been defamed by Mr. Gandhi’s remark.

The **law of defamation** is clear that if references are made to an **indefinite “class” of people**, an individual cannot claim that they are a member of that class. Therefore, they have been defamed.

For example, if I say that “all lawyers are thieves”, a lawyer cannot come to court and say that they have been defamed.

The “class of all persons in the world bearing the surname Modi” is a **indefinite and indeterminate group**.

Quantum of the sentence– Criminal defamation has a maximum penalty of two years’ imprisonment. This ‘maximum penalty’ is very rarely awarded. Defamation is a **pure speech offence**.

People should not be imprisoned for lengthy periods purely on the **basis of their statement**. There are almost **no recorded instances** of courts awarding the maximum sentence of two years in a criminal defamation case.

The quantum of sentence was exactly that which was needed to attract an MP's disqualification from Parliament. Indeed, immediately after the judgement, Mr. Gandhi was disqualified. At that point, the judgement had not even been translated.

Why disqualification proceedings against Rahul Gandhi is not good for India parliamentary democracy?

The disqualification proceedings are another example of **delegitimizing the opponent**. The Representation of the People Act provides for disqualification.

Disqualifying an elected member of a legislature is an **extremely serious action** in a parliamentary democracy. It leaves them **without representation** until a by-election is announced and the seat is filled.

For this reason, the Representation of the People Act kept a parliamentarian's disqualification in abeyance until at least one appellate body **could scrutinise** the initial order of conviction.

Why striking down provisions related to the three month period given to the legislature for appeal in the Lily Thomas case affects the political process?

The Supreme Court reasoned that the convicted politician could always move the appellate court for a stay upon their conviction. However, this interpretation **concentrates more power** in the hands of courts when it comes to the political process.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat issued the **disqualification order** before the convicted individual's lawyers moved for a stay. So, the **protection** the Court thought was available is **not sufficient**.

The Lily Thomas judgement is just one of many examples where the Supreme Court has **intervened in the political process**. It has made the **delegitimization of opponents** easier.

It is concerning because one crucial component of the legitimacy of courts is their reputation for **impartiality between contending political forces**.

62. Understanding the street dogs-human conflict

Source– The post is based on the article “Understanding the street dogs-human conflict” published in “The Hindu” on 29th March 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology. GS2- E-governance

Relevance– Issues related to regulation of digital space

News– The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill 2022 was proposed recently. It provides a framework to safeguard citizens' information from misuse and unauthorised access.

What is the approach followed by the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill 2022?

The current draft of the Bill tries to tackle the issue of **conflicting sectoral regulations**. It states that the provisions of the Bill will **complement and not create exemptions** from existing regulations. But, in case of conflict, the Bill will take precedence.

The Bill raises concerns about **sectoral regulations** that may go beyond what the Bill provides.

What is the importance of sectoral expertise?

Data protection and privacy are highly dependent on **context**, including the type of data collected, how it is collected, the intended use and the associated risks. This makes **sectoral expertise** crucial to **regulate effectively**.

Sectoral expertise offers a deep understanding of a particular sector, including its **market dynamics, technologies, risks and business models**. It also enables regulators to **engage with stakeholders and industry experts** in a well informed and productive manner.

What are the major approaches adopted by the global community to regulate privacy and protect data?

They are comprehensive legislation and sector -specific regulations.

Comprehensive approach– The **European Union's General Data Protection Regulation** is the comprehensive approach.

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The GDPR, despite being a **comprehensive framework**, has specific provisions for certain industries such as health care.

GDPR also permits EU Member States to implement measures which go beyond the provisions given in the GDPR. For example, Germany has stricter provisions compared to the GDPR.

The **European Data Protection Board** is made up of representatives from each EU member state's data protection authority. It provides **guidance on the implementation and interpretation** of the GDPR, including sector specific issues.

Sectoral approach– The sectoral approach is **followed in the United States**. It is seen through laws such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act in health care, and the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act for the financial sector. It consists of **regulations tailored to specific industries**.

What are issues with the American sectoral approach to data protection?

There are issues related to **inconsistent protection, problems in enforcement, overlapping and contradictory provisions, and a lack of federal regulation**.

This creates confusion and coverage gaps for businesses. There is **no centralised authority** to enforce data protection laws. It leads to a **lack of standardisation**.

What is the way forward for regulation of data in India?

The GDPR model may not work for India as the The Data Protection Board is designed as a **grievance agency, and not as a regulator**.

The current draft of the Bill needs **greater clarity and specificity** regarding the interaction with sectoral regulations. There is a need to draw from our experience to find the right balance.

In India, we already have sectoral regulations regarding data protection such as the Reserve Bank of India's directive on storage of payment data. These are the result of **extensive industry consultations and expert input**.

Neglecting these regulations and establishing a new framework would **undermine the considerable effort** invested in their creation. It will require the industry to **readjust their operations** again at considerable cost.

The DPDP Bill must serve as the **minimum layer of protection**, with sectoral regulators having the ability to build on these protections.

Data protection is a **complex subject**. There is a need to create room for **sectoral experts** to **safeguard the interests of citizens** more effectively.

63. Blended finance can fill investment gaps to meet SDGs

Source: This post is created based on the article "**Blended finance can fill investment gaps to meet SDGs**", published in Live Mint on 29th March 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy – Finance instruments

Context: Blended finance can help to meet SDGs by filling investment.

During covid-19, several producers of raw materials fell short of working capital required to for face masks, vaccines and supply chains.

To tackle this issue, a blended financing entity called Sustainable Access to Markets and Resources for Innovative Delivery of Healthcare (Samridh) was launched. The scheme was launched with the help of multiple stakeholders including Indian government, USAID, The Rockefeller Foundation and many more.

What was the significance of Samridh scheme?

The scheme assisted over 25 million people and deployed over \$16 million in philanthropic funds to over 60 social enterprises.

It has mobilized a capital pool of \$300 million to offer both grant and debt financing provisions to healthcare enterprises and innovators. It helped sustain their operations.

How blended finance mechanism are attractive to investors?

Blended finance lets investors choose different risk tolerances, while all participating in the same project. It means different investors can choose different risk and return mix in the same investment.

It incentivizes and mobilizes private capital into the business where investment is hard to come. To mitigate risks, blended finance initiatives offer technical support, capacity-building aid, relevant data and tools for impact measurement, monitoring and evaluation.

Successive grants are outcome-based, which is based on achieving set milestones for further funding.

Why there is a need for blended finance mechanism to achieve SDGs?

According to the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, there is currently an annual shortfall of \$4 trillion in developing countries.

A policy brief by the G20's Think 20 Engagement Group highlights that several nations of the Global South are likely to fall short of their 2030 [sustainable development goals \(SDGs\)](#) on account of a funding gap.

Low-income regions find it harder to attract funding, due to small economy size, high regulatory complexity and country-specific risks. Moreover, relying solely on philanthropy and government funding cannot address transnational challenges.

Therefore, blended finance can be helpful, where investors hardly invest.

Innovative blending can **support project preparation and solve information gaps**, enabling investment in multiple projects. It can work at the institutional level by blending public subsidies in the market to encourage private investments.

Global crises like climate change and food insecurity can be handled using blended finance. In the G20 Sustainable Finance Roadmap also, India has emphasized the need to adopt innovative financing methods and can help the Global South develop blended finance instruments to meet SDGs.

Developing nations require an environment that lets private investments thrive, which calls for activating policies that allow private players and philanthropies to support their growth.

64. [RIP Sasha: India's dream of its own cheetah population rests on her companions](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**RIP Sasha: India's dream of its own cheetah population rests on her companions**” published in the **Indian Express** on **29th March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Sasha's death on India's cheetah reintroduction project.

News: Sasha, one of the eight Namibian cheetahs translocated to Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh has died due to kidney infection. The infection is reportedly picked up while in captivity in Namibia.

About Sasha, Cheetah Reintroduction Project and Kuno National Park

Read here: [Cheetah Sasha dies due to kidney ailment in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park](#)

About Cheetah range countries

Cheetahs' smaller, lighter Asiatic cousins once ranged across the swathe of land from the Indian subcontinent to the Arabian peninsula. They are now declared critically endangered, found only in Iran now. That too only 12 — nine males and three females — remain.

This is because of **a)** a decline in prey, **b)** loss of habitat and **c)** the rise in trophy hunting.

In India, the last three recorded cheetahs are believed to have been felled by Maharaja Ramanuj Pratap Singh Deo of Surguja in 1947.

What is the present state of India's cheetah reintroduction project?

Captive cheetahs, like domestic cats, are known to be especially prone to kidney disease. On the other hand, kidney disease is rarely seen in their wild counterparts. Among 8 cheetahs brought from Namibia, one male and one female have been released into the wild.

65. [GDPs Without Borders – That even Japan is open now to immigration shows what mistakes other aging, rich countries are making](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “GDPs Without Borders – That even Japan is open now to immigration shows what mistakes other aging, rich countries are making” published in **The Times of India** on **29th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS – 3: Employment.

Relevance: About global worker shortages and the role of the immigrant workforce.

News: The Japanese agriculturalists are now recruiting farm labour from across the Indian countryside. This is because Indians are willing to climb up Japanese mountains to cut and carry down Koyamaki (umbrella pines).

This is a win-win for both, as India has an overabundance of young farmers and the declining Japanese economy is facing worker shortages. Further, migrants also send money back to India.

How global nations are tackling worker shortages?

Many countries, like Japan, are having ageing populations. These countries are fully aware that expanding the immigrant workforce will expand their tax base, innovation, productivity, GDP et al.

IMF and others have also found that aggregate gains from the immigrant workforce can materialise very quickly.

What are the alternative methods tried by global nations to tackle worker shortages?

Efforts for raising national birth rates: This method is a complete failure. For example, in Japan itself, the population has changed little since 1991.

Create barriers to immigration: Rich countries' that keep the barriers to immigration not only hurts the poorer origin countries but also the rich countries also.

Read more: [Stopping the boats: On the U.K.'s new 'Illegal Migration Law'](#)

What needs to be done to facilitate a more immigrant workforce in future?

Countries like China and America's futures will likely be scripted by their exceptional attractiveness to migrants. A full embrace of immigrant workers will cheer the global economy and create GDPs Without Borders.

66. [State budgets may be too optimistic about their capital expenditure](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “State budgets may be too optimistic about their capital expenditure” published in **The Indian Express** on **30th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Budgeting

Relevance: analysis of states' budget.

News: Many states have come with their state budget. The article discusses the trend emerging out of the budget of the states.

What are the different trends emerging from the states' budget?

First, states have estimated their revenue receipts to grow at a slower pace in the coming financial year. **States expect their revenue growth to slow down from 19 percent in 2022-23 to around 13 percent in 2023-24.** This is due to the expectations of a slowing economy.

Second, some states, such as Bihar and Telangana, expect their own tax and non-tax revenues to grow more rapidly in the coming fiscal year. **These earnings are so large that they exceed the nominal GDP growth anticipated in the Union budget.**

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This higher revenue estimate comes at a time when the RBI expects a drop in economic growth from 7% in 2022-23 to 6.4 percent in 2023-24. Therefore, any shortfall in the revenue collection would affect the capex of the state.

Third, some states have forecasted much slower spending growth in the coming fiscal year. **Spending, which was above 20% in 2022-23, is anticipated to fall to 10% in 2023-24.**

States are expected to spend **1 percent of their GSDP on transport, 2.5 percent of GSDP on health, nutrition, social and family welfare.**

Some states have also continued to **prioritize debt management.** While state spending on committed expenditures (salaries, pensions, and interest payments) is expected to increase at approximately the same rate as last fiscal year.

Fourth, even though most of these states anticipate their revenue deficits to shrink in the coming year, the budget does not call for significant fiscal consolidation. **This means that a larger percentage of state borrowings will be used to fund capital spending.** Further, most states do not expect a sizeable reduction in their debt to GSDP ratios in the coming years.

Fifth, Capital expenditure by states is expected to rise above 3% of GSDP, exceeding revenue expenditure in the coming year. This is consistent with the central's government's expenditure priorities.

A higher budgetary allocation over capex is good but still concerns of remain.

What are the concerns with capital expenditure?

As per ICRA's estimates, states have spent just around half of what has been budgeted for, in the first 10 months of the year (April-January). **This implies that states are unlikely to achieve their capex targets for the year.**

Further, spending patterns of the states will depend on their revenues and therefore, **an inability to meet this year's targets will also raise questions over whether the targets for next year can be met or not.**

What is the way ahead?

States account for a sizeable share of public sector investments in the economy. Hence, slower growth in state capex implies that the overall public sector growth will be weaker both this and the next year.

67. Import substitution can set climate action back

Source: The post is based on the article **"Import substitution can set climate action back"** published in the **Livemint** on **30th March 2023.**

Syllabus: GS – 3: Energy.

Relevance: About India's solar panel producers.

News: India has set a target of 500GW of carbon-free capacity by 2030 (The present capacity is 122GW). The government is using public funds to spur the local production of solar panels by private players.

Import substitution under Atmanirbhar Bharat is India's biggest policy shift in recent times. But that is failing to provide results for India's renewable energy sector.

About India's solar panel imports and steps to curb imports

China has been the world's big supplier of solar panels. Imports accounted for over four-fifths of the panels set up in India until last year.

To curb these imports, **a)** India imposed a safeguard duty of 15% on Chinese and Malaysian imports that were allegedly being dumped—sold below their cost of manufacture, **b)** India is charging a 40% import duty on photovoltaic modules and 25% on cells, and **c)** The government is providing an incentive scheme for polysilicon and wafers to solar cells and modules.

What are the challenges India is facing with import substitution?

a) Over half the incentive schemes fund is going to only three firms, **b)** The job gains from the incentive scheme is modest, **c)** Domestic panel-makers were still unable to compete with global

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players, and **d)** Import barriers allow India's local market to function at policy-elevated price levels.

Note: Module prices of imported goods are exactly 40% higher than the local goods. But the profit motive of private producers are selling their modules at par with the imported price.

-India and the world are **not exploring the logic of permitting global market forces in renewable space to reduce fossil fuels** applications in energy needs. So, import substitution might be a setback for climate action targets.

-Of the 280GW of solar capacity aimed for by 2030, India has only a little above 64GW right now. With import substitution, the pace might be delayed.

Read more: [India plans to export solar power: official](#)

What should India do to make India's solar panel producers competitive?

If India's overall aim is to reduce carbon exhaust, then it should be done at the lowest possible cost. The best way to make Indian industries competitive is by dropping duties and capping local prices by exposing Indian industries to global competition.

Read more: [What it will take to fulfill India's solar power dream](#)

68. [The issues with the Quality Control Orders for fibres](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**The issues with the Quality Control Orders for fibres**" published in **The Hindu** on **31st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Growth and Development

Relevance: about revised Quality Control Orders (QCO) for textile industry

News: The article discusses the revised Quality Control Orders (QCO) issued for the textile industry.

About revised Quality Control Orders (QCO)

A revised Quality Control Orders (QCO) have been issued for fibres (**cotton, polyester and viscose**). These fibres constitute the basic raw materials for the majority of the Indian textile and clothing industry.

Under the revised QCO, international manufacturers of these fibres, who supply to India, are also mandated to get a certificate of quality control from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

BIS is the certifying authority for the QCOs.

What is the aim of the revised Quality Control Orders (QCO)?

The Indian textiles manufacturers import fibres due to the cost competitiveness, non-availability in the domestic market, or to meet a specified demand of the overseas buyer.

The fibres imported are often sub-quality and cheaper which does not cater the demand of the buyers.

Therefore, **the main aim of the QCO is to control import of sub-quality and cheaper items and to ensure that customers get quality products.**

What are the challenges associated with the revised QCO?

First, it is difficult to get a BIS certificate as it involves cost and many would not be interested in getting the certificate.

This will make the Indian textile manufacturers, who are dependent on these suppliers for the raw material, to either look at other suppliers or lose orders.

Second, BIS officials have to visit the manufacturing unit abroad before issuing the certificate. This makes the process time consuming and the process is yet to be completed for all suppliers who have already applied for the BIS registration.

There is also no clarity on the fibres that were shipped to India before the certification.

Third, the domestic and international textile buyers have established a supply chain over the years and **BIS certification may cause disruptions** to it.

Fourth, some varieties of viscose or polyester fibres have special functional properties and separate **HS (Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System)** code when imported. The textile industry imports just small quantities of such fibres and restricting its availability will deny Indian consumers of niche products.

Fifth, there is also a fear of **costs going up for basic garments**.

What can be the way ahead?

First, the textile industry is of the view that import of specialty fibres that are used as blends with other fibres should be made available without restriction.

Second, any overseas applicant for the BIS certificate should get it without delay after inspection.

Third, concerns exist regarding textile units using inferior fibres that aren't covered by the QCO, and financial assistance required by MSME yarn mills to set up laboratories to test quality of the products.

Therefore, the QCO should be applied only after the uncertainties have been resolved and the anomalies have been corrected.

69. [Women Not In Job Market? It's A Myth](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Women Not In Job Market? It's A Myth"** published in **The Times of India** on **31st March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economic development: Indian Economy and issues relating to growth, development and employment.

Relevance: Abut female labour force participation rate

News: The [Periodic Labour Force Survey \(PLFS\)](#) often in its various reports has shown low female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) in India. However, this might not be true.

Why is low female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) shown in India?

FLFPR is shown low despite the fact that **15% of pilots in India are women which is the highest in the world**. And, as per the **World Bank**, 42.7% of women in India were STEM graduates in 2018.

The low FLFPR as per the PLFS is because India fails the **"smell test" or the "duck test"**. This implies that the actual FLFPR is higher from what is shown.

Further, NSSO data for 2004/05 showed FLFPR to be 35% but in 2011/12 this figure dropped to 26.1%

The reason behind the decline in FLFPR is because of the **changed definition of the ILO from 2011**.

The changed ILO definitions says that production towards home consumption (e.g., care-taking of cattle for milk consumed at home) would no longer be counted as "work for pay or profit". This dropped millions of women from FLFPR.

Note: Duck test refers to identification of something by its habitual characteristics.

Must Read: [PLFS findings on FLFPR: More women in the labour force must not lead us to complacency](#)

How can there be an increase in the FLFPR?

FLPR can be **increased by the enrolment of women in India at all levels of education**.

The new generation (between 25 and 30 years) will cause the FLFPR to increase because higher education leads to greater work participation.

Further, **Indian women have a fertility rate less than the replacement rate of 2.1 and dropping**. And attitudes around the world (and in India) towards childcare are changing.

Therefore, having babies is no longer a constraint towards FLFPR.

What is the way ahead?

First, there has been an **increase in female enrolment in higher education**, i.e., from two-fifths of male enrolment in 1983 to now 83%. The ratio is 95% in the dominant enrolment age group of 15-22 years.

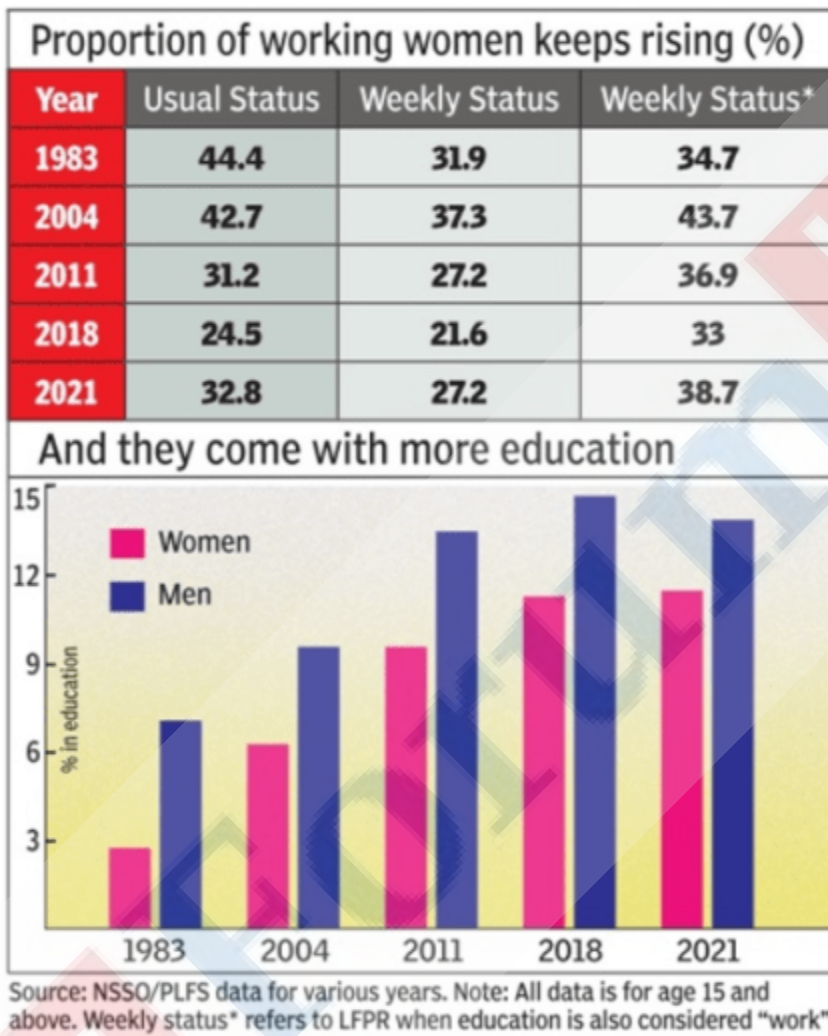
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Second, labour force participation rates for women are now equal to, or higher, than the level observed in 2011 (if no change in ILO definition is considered).

Third, adjusted weekly LFPR status for all women is now at 38.7%, which is two percentage points above 2011.

Therefore, the issue of low FLFPR given by the PLFS in its various reports should not be considered as a matter of concern.

The growing enrollment with increasing FLFPR must be acknowledged by the policy makers and international organizations.



Source: Times of India

Note: Three different definitions of LFPR are – weekly status, long-term employment (usual status), and weekly LFPR adjusted for education (i.e., one is considered "in work force" if attending school).

70. [Laud the failure of J&J's shot at patent evergreening](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**Laud the failure of J&J's shot at patent evergreening**” published in the “**mint**” on **30th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance- Issues related to patents

News- Last week, when the Indian Patent Office rejected an application by Johnson & Johnson (J&J) to extend its patent on its TB drug Bedaquiline beyond its primary patent's expiry this July.

Why is there a need for proactive action against TB?

TB is an **ancient airborne disease**. It is one of the **deadliest infectious killers**. According to the **WHO**, 10.6 million were infected by the disease in 2021 and an estimated 1.6 million people died.

India bears the **world's largest burden** of TB as well as its multi-drug resistant version (MDR-TB).

Due to **resistance to existing medications**, **strains** have emerged that could evade the effects of various drugs. It means **fewer treatment options, lower survival rates and a much longer duration of treatment**.

The drugs have **harrowing side effects** ranging from kidney and liver disorders to permanent deafness.

What are some facts about the Bedaquiline drug?

It is used against **advanced TB**. It has improved **cure rates**. It is also observed to be a **safer alternative to injectables** such as Kanamycin and Amikacin.

WHO has advised the countries to scale up its use, with certain caveats.

What are provisions in the Indian patent act to safeguard the interests of citizens?

The Indian patent act has special provisions to **prevent evergreening**. These were introduced through an **amendment to the Indian Patents Act in 2005**.

It ensures that a patent is not granted to a new form or use of a known substance, unless the modification shows **enhanced efficacy**.

These provisions have acted as important **public-health safeguards**. It has allowed the timely entry of generics and helped to bring down the cost of life-saving drugs. It makes them **more accessible**.

What will be the future implications of the order?

The failure of J&J's **evergreening attempt** will let other drug-makers manufacture and sell this life-saving drug after July 2023. **Competition** will ensure its price drop.

The national TB programme currently relies on J&J supplies for its Bedaquiline requirement. It will be able to procure the drug from other players expected to enter the market.

India **exports generic drugs** to several low-income countries where **TB prevalence** is high. So, patients elsewhere will also be able to access this drug at **reasonable cost**.

71. [The country mustn't get entangled in a web of fake news](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**The country mustn't get entangled in a web of fake news**” published in the “**mint**” on **30th March 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in Internal Security Challenges

Relevance- Issues related to misinformation and fake news

News- The events during the Covid19 shows the disrupting potential of fake news.

What are some examples related to the impact of fake news?

Fake news during the Covid hit the **poultry sector** hard. As per research note published by **ICAR-Central Avian Research Institute**, industry's losses were over \$3 billion.

According to the **All India Poultry Breeders Association**, Indian poultry farmers faced an average loss of about ₹50 per kg as a result of rumors.

The misinformation on the Indian poultry industry had **socio-economic ramifications**. Stakeholders operating at different levels of the value chain had multiple forms of impacts. They faced **social and psychological distress**.

Farmers could not sell their chicken for a long period of time during the pandemic. As **procurement dropped sharply**, they were left with culling as their only option. This led to both **short- and long-term financial adversities** for farmers.

How fake news works?

Fake news rarely **works in isolation**. A message that might look harmless has the potential to impact many livelihoods.

Research shows that misleading or manipulative information relies on **psychological mechanisms**. In times of anxiety, a **defence mechanism** could kick. It helps the mind to deny the **seriousness of a threat**.

Why does India need to act decisively to deal with fake news?

India has an estimated **850 million active internet users**. This growth has seen a **parallel boom of misinformation**. NCRB shows a spike in fake news cases under **Section 505 of the IPC** across the country in 2020.

The fact-checking agency of Lok Sabha busted 1,160 rumours since its inception in November 2019.

Newschecker.in identified **2,824 instances of misinformation** across nine languages in 2021 alone. Since a vast number of cases **go unreported**. The actual prevalence of the problem is significantly worse.

Artificial intelligence tools that create **photo-realistic images** have added to the menace.

India has had **no specific legislation** to regulate fake news. The government relies on **insufficient provisions** such as the **Information Technology Act and IPC**.

What is the way forward to deal with fake news?

Better campaigns aimed at generating **media literacy** among users of social media are needed. It is incumbent upon all users, however, to **identify fake news and think hard** before we share anything over the internet.

The upcoming **Digital India bill** is expected to have measures against fake news. In framing rules, there is a need to understand the **gravity of the problem**.

The anticipated law itself does not end up becoming a **weapon against free expression**.

It is crucial for the bill to appropriately **define the term 'fake news'**.

72. [Colombian hippopotamus: Hippos are coming](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Hippos are coming"** published in the **Indian Express** on **31st March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Colombian hippopotamus.

News: In the late 1980s, the founder and leader of the Medellin Cartel in Colombia brought a few hippos as a collection of his exotic animals. After his death in 1993, four of the hippopotamus escaped and have since multiplied.

Recently, the Colombian government has decided to relocate 70 such hippopotamus – and 60 are reportedly going to come to India.

Note: These are called as 'cocaine hippos' as they were brought to the country by a drug lord.

What is Hippopotamus?

Must read: [Hippopotamus](#)

They are also called as river horse.

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These are semi-aquatic herbivores, which have often been posited as a “missing link” between land-based and marine mammals (whales, seals, etc).

They are known to kill creatures as massive as the Nile crocodile and kill more humans than any large carnivore in the African continent.

What will be the benefit for India if Colombian hippopotamus arrives in India?

Their arrival to India can serve many a purpose. They will make for a great tourist attraction. Like the cheetahs at Kuno in Madhya Pradesh, the “river horse” could lead to a jump in tourists for whichever state(s) receives them.

73. Giving International Court of Justice a say could make climate-related processes more justice-oriented

Source: The post is based on the article “**Giving International Court of Justice a say could make climate-related processes more justice-oriented**” published in the **Indian Express** on **31st March 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the UNGA resolution on climate injustice

News: Recently, a UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution has asked the International Court of Justice to evaluate options under international law for suing countries failing to avert climate emergencies.

About the UNGA resolution on climate injustice

The resolution was sponsored by the small Pacific island nation, Vanuatu. It was adopted unanimously by the UNGA.

According to the UNGA, the resolution will provide clarity to states on their obligations under international law to protect their people, now and in the future, from climate impacts.

Reason for adoption: Many countries are now asserting their right to reparations after climate emergencies, for example, Pakistan.

Read more: [India Submits its Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy to UNFCCC](#)

What is the significance of the UNGA resolution on climate injustice?

a) The ICJ’s opinion will not be binding but its pronouncements carry moral weight, **b)** The resolution reflects the frustration of the international community — especially of small island countries — with the procedures of the global climate agencies, particularly the UNFCCC, **c)** The resolution testifies to the global consensus on the climate crisis, **d)** The advisory could set the stage for countries incorporating climate justice in their legal frameworks. Just like the UN Declaration of Human Rights has found a place in statute books across the world and **e)** The intervention of ICJ could make climate-related processes more justice-oriented.

What are the previous instances where climate change negotiations were taken by a non-environmental UN forum?

Global warming has been part of the UN Security Council’s agenda since 2007. From time to time in the past 15 years, the UNSC has tried to frame the issue from a security standpoint, instead of looking at it from only a developmental or environmental perspective.

However, both India and China have rightly resisted the securitisation of climate change.

Must read: [IPCC AR 6 Synthesis Report](#)

What should be done?

Though the UNGA resolution on climate injustice is talking about rights and justice instead of securitisation, holding individual countries to account for their climate inaction will have many challenges.

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Instead of continuing climate change negotiations on a non-environmental UN forum, the nations should work on **reforming the UNFCCC**. UNFCCC need to be more equity-sensitive and justice-oriented. But for that, it requires support from wealthy members like the US.

74. [The focus of the new policy on reducing points of friction across the system is unmistakable](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The focus of the new policy on reducing points of friction across the system is unmistakable**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **1st April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance– External sector of the economy

News– Recently, the **Foreign Trade Policy 2023** was unveiled by the Union government.

What are the aims of the new trade policy?

Shift from an **incentive to a tax remission-based regime**.

Improve the **ease of doing business**.

Promote exports through **collaborations**.

Focus on **emerging areas**.

The government has articulated the goal of achieving **\$2 trillion in export of goods and services by 2030**.

What are the focus areas of the new policy?

The focus of the new policy is on **reducing points of friction across the system**. The measures focus on providing **automatic approvals for various permissions**.

For instance, the **processing time for revalidation** of various authorisations, which currently ranges from three days to one month, is expected to be brought down to one day.

Facilitation of **e-commerce exports, widening the basket covered under RODTEP** are also the focus areas.

Other thrust areas of the policy are steps being taken to **boost manufacturing, rationalising the thresholds for recognition of exporters, merchanting trade reform, and greater use of the rupee in international trade**.

Further, a **one-time amnesty scheme** has been introduced that aims at faster resolution of trade disputes.

What is the way forward for better implementation of the policy?

India accounts for a **minuscule portion of global trade**. Its share in global merchandise exports stands at around 1.8%, while that in services is roughly 4%. There is **considerable scope for improvement** for the country on this count.

The new policy needs to be **supplemented with other measures** to boost the country's trade performance. These range from **lowering import tariffs and ensuring a competitive exchange rate to signing broader and deeper free trade agreements**.

75. [Global warming will cause conditions beyond human tolerance — this will impact homes too](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Global warming will cause conditions beyond human tolerance — this will impact homes too**” published in **The Times of India** on **1st April 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Climate Change

Relevance: about the impact of climate change on homes

News: The article discusses the impact of climate change on homes.

What are some of the impacts of climate change on homes?

Indoor house temperature is often two to three degrees below the outside temperature, especially in tropical countries.

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In the coming future, **the indoor temperature is expected to rise to 36 to 38 degrees which is beyond human tolerance levels.**

Further, **the designs used for building homes are neither climate resilient nor good for health.**

When building homes, **high density and the number of units are preferred** over the health advantages associated with climate adaptive building.

How can houses become climate resilient?

In warmer countries like India, **natural ventilation can play a key role** because there isn't a sharp difference between indoor and outdoor temperatures.

Roshan Daans, the traditional windows can also reduce heat slowly and intelligently.

Vertical greening is also beneficial; however, it should not be used in places with high humidity.

People also install exhaust fans on windows, leaving little space for ventilation. Hence, **buoyancy driven ventilation** will be needed to lower heat.

It is also necessary to understand local climatic conditions before building houses. **For example,** tropical nations mustn't mimic the tall glass building model which comes from very different climatic zones.

Further, **factors like ease of using the technology, accessibility, awareness** of co-benefits, affordable maintenance, etc. are responsible for adopting any climate resilient technology at homes.

However, any such technology would also require social acceptance.

Why is social acceptance necessary for adopting climate resilient technology at homes?

As per a study, it was found that **women in India are reluctant to use air conditioners for themselves.** In India, **women didn't take many energy decisions independently,** rather they are mostly dependent on males of their families.

It was also found that despite temperatures over 30 degrees, women were not using air conditioners for themselves. **Women suffer more than males from heat, which has a negative impact on their health and well-being.**

Thus, approval across all genders and social classes is required for a climate resilient technology to succeed in the market.

What can be the way ahead?

Sustainability 1.0 gave materials which are low carbon value chain systems. But **Sustainability 2.0 means thinking about** people-centric metrics like the acceptability indices of technology.

Thus, **engineers involved in developing such a kind of technology should also study the interaction between technology and society** and understand people's aspirations and constraints.

It will enable industry to help communities navigate climate change better within their homes.

76. Human Genome Editing: Scientists Vs Rogues

Source: The post is based on an article **"Human Genome Editing: Scientists Vs Rogues"** published in **The Times of India** on **1st April 2023.**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: concerns over genome editing technology

News: The **Third International Summit on Human Genome Editing** was held in London last month.

What are the excerpts of the summit?

Scientists found that changing genes in some of the cells of an existing person does not impact their heritable cells. Gene editing method like **CRISPR** is also being used by scientists to **cure sickle cell disease.**

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However, **extremely high costs and infrastructure needs of gene therapy treatments are not manageable** for a vast majority of either patients or healthcare systems.

CRISPR has also been used in China to alter the [embryos](#) (created through IVF) of twin girls to try to make them resistant to HIV in 2018.

However, concerns remain over funding and monitoring of gene therapy, especially in a country like China.

There was news of efforts going in China to get access to cutting-edge western genomic and biotech ecosystems through academic espionage and early-stage investment.

There were also concerns over carrying gene therapies in China in the absence of scientific public documentation as it may have a catastrophic impact on humanity, as was seen in the case Covid-19.

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

What lies ahead for India in genome editing technology?

Developing Gene therapy technologies in India is not only about cost ownership and access but also the processes of knowledge production and knowledge produced.

Therefore, **genome editing research reaching its full therapeutic potential for Indians will need science in India to step up.**