# 9 PM Compilation

13th to 18th March, 2023

# 9 PM Compilation for the Month of March [Second Week] 2023

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# General

# Studies

# Paper –1

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**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.

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**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 loyaltie**s in Africa were destroyed by the **boundaries drawn by the west**. Civil wars happen when **local leaders challenge a "national" leade**r 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**

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# General

# Studies

# Paper –2

**General Studies - 2**

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1. India-US economic partnership needs more energy

**Source**: The post is based on thearticle "**India-US economic partnership needs more energy**" published in **Business Standard** on **13thMarch 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.

2. 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, f**emale MLAs' representation** stands at an **average of 9%**. India's ranking in this regard has fallen over the last few years.

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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 retiremen**t 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**.

3. 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.

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**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 sector**s 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?**

S**ocial, 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.

**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 forvarious 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 dat**a may be useful for it.

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4. 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.

5. 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.

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**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.

6.  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 oftheir 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 therelevant 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.

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 in**terferes 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.**

7. Our e-courts project needs a big rehaul to assure us transparency

**Source**: The post is based on thearticle "**Our e-courts project needs a big rehaul to assure us transparency**"published in **Mint**on **14thMarch 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 ofthe 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 IIIthrough 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.

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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.

8. 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.

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.

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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 reconciliationpoints 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).

9. 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,

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**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 d**igital 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 r**espect 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.**

10. 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 anprofitable market even if foreign universities can attracta 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.

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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 core 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 f**oreign 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 fees. 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, t**he **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 2**019 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.

11. [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.

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**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.

12. 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 strategyagainst Chinese aggression** in the Himalayas.

Over **65 per cent of China's oil dependenc**y **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.

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.**

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

The **strategic rules governing wa**r 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.

### 13. 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.**

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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.**

## 14. 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 i**n 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.

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**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 Sue**z 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 e**xpansion 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 s**trategic 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.**

15. 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 c**onsumer networks and enable collective action**.

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

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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 l**ocal 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 interaction**s 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 a**ccess gaps, provide flexibility of participation to the citizen, and enable a robust avenue for public participation.**

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16. 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 GoI'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.

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**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.

## 17. [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 **16ᵗʰMarch 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, d**espite 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.

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**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.

18. 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 **16thMarch 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.

19. 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.

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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 includesmodern 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 donethrough the promotion of social entrepreneurship, empowerment of youth and women through skill development and entrepreneurship.

**Tourism potential** will be leveraged through the promotion of l**ocal 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.

20. 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 girlsand 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 andmathematics) graduates are women. However, they are**under-represented in the workforceand 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.**

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**Educational empowermen**t- 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. T**hey 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.

## 21. 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 presidentship of theShanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the G-20. The focus is also on China whichheld 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 resident**s from poverty. Over 70% of the government's expenditure went toward ensuring people'swell-being. Living standards continue to witness newimprovements.

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 a**ncient 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.

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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 o

## 22. 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.

## 23. 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.

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-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](#) |
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# General

# Studies

# Paper –3

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**General Studies - 3**

1. 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.

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.

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2. 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.**

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 decouplingfrom 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**.

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Companies that wish to maximise their opportunities in the global economy need to **embrace these new requirements** and adjust them accordingly.

3. 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 investmen**t 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 as**tructural 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 f**inancial 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 chai**n continues, pushed by **geopolitics and high costs in China**.

4. 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.

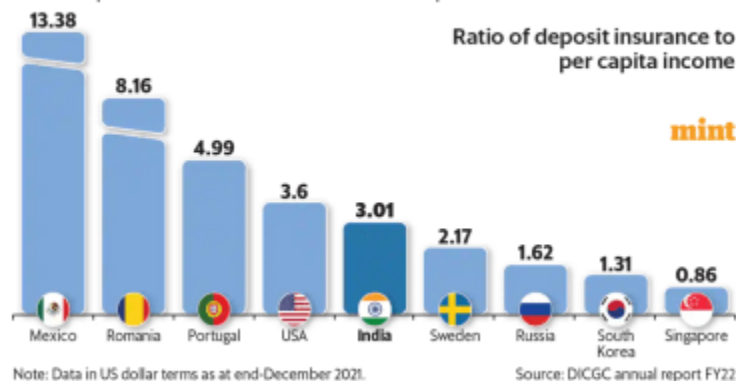**Relevance**: About SVB failure and its impact on India.

**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**

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**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.

Ratio of deposit insurance to per capita income

mint

| Country | Value |
| --- | --- |
| Mexico | 13.38 |
| Romania | 8.16 |
| Portugal | 4.99 |
| USA | 3.6 |
| India | 3.01 |
| Sweden | 2.17 |
| Russia | 1.62 |
| South Korea | 1.31 |
| Singapore | 0.86 |

Note: Data in US dollar terms as at end-December 2021.
Source: DICGC annual report FY22

**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.

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5. 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 c**ommitted 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.

### 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.

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6.  Why do landfills catch fire during summers?

**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.

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.

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7.  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 misinformatio**n. 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 i**nsufficient 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 Alphfold 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 c**onsistent 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.**

8.  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.

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| **Read more:** [Why onion prices have crashed in Lasalgaon wholesale market](#) |
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**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](#) |
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**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.

9. [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 CCNTS**. 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 Act**s. India is far away from achieving the **principles of one country –** **"one police"** and **"one prison"**.

10. 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 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.

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**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

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