



**Mains Marathon**  
**Compilation**

**27<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2023**

## **Mains Marathon Compilation for the Month of March, (Fourth Week) 2023**

- 1. HECI (Higher Education Commission of India) can play a transformative role in making India's higher education an abundant ground for inventive ideas, reinforcing all of India's initiatives to build institutes of excellence. Elaborate**
- 2. Highlight the Issues associated with the groundwater extraction in India. Also, suggest some steps to manage the ground water level in India.**
- 3. Neglecting existing regulations and establishing a new framework would undermine the considerable effort invested in their creation. Discuss the statement, with a special focus on data protection mechanisms in India.**
- 4. Discuss the effectiveness of Blended finance as an investment tool to fill investment gaps to meet SDGs.**
- 5. Discuss the significance and potential of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).**
- 6. SMART PDS scheme goes beyond just ration distribution. It will allow greater accountability across government schemes. Discuss**
- 7. Discuss the importance of the limitations of judicial powers with respect to executive Policy matters.**
- 8. How government aims to achieve export promotion with the help of India's Foreign Trade Policy, 2023?**

## Mains Marathon Compilation for the Month of March, (Fourth Week) 2023

**Q.1) HECI (Higher Education Commission of India) can play a transformative role in making India's higher education an abundant ground for inventive ideas, reinforcing all of India's initiatives to build institutes of excellence. Elaborate**

**ToI**

**Introduction:** Contextual introduction.

**Body:** Explain how HECI (Higher Education Commission of India) can play a transformative role in India's higher education.

**Conclusion:** Write a way forward.

The **National Education Policy 2020** envisages the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as the regulator for higher education, with four verticals for regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standard setting. Each of them will **function in an autonomous mode but in a coordinated manner**. The HECI is supposed to replace the University Grants Commission (a statutory body) which has been responsible for the maintenance of the standard of higher education in India.

HECI can play a transformative role in India's higher education in following manner:

- All degree-awarding institutions are expected to be guided by HECI by holistically **harmonising multiple higher education disciplines**, irrespective of which council or regulator managed them earlier.
- The grant functions would be carried out by the HRD Ministry, and the HECI would **focus only on academic matters**.
- The HECI **encourages public disclosures** by specifying the various parameters of the academic outcomes and the academic performance by all the higher educational institutions.
- HECI is tasked with the mandate of **improving academic standards with specific focus on learning outcomes, evaluation** of academic performance by institutions, mentoring of institutions, training of teachers, promote use of educational technology etc.
- HECI will make the regulation of higher education institutions will be **more transparent**.
- By harnessing the potential of collaborative efforts, HECI can usher in a contemporary, **streamlined regulatory approach** involving all relevant regulatory bodies and stakeholders.
- HECI will holistically **integrate multiple higher education disciplines** in all degree providing colleges.
- The use of the Academic Bank of Credits by all educational institutions will provide **mobility for students to move from one institution to another or migrate** from one discipline to another.

National Education Policy, 2020 also argues for a **'light but tight' regulatory framework**. The function of HECI must be transparent, open to take suggestions and feedback, practise regulatory self-restraint and intervene only when there is necessity for intervention.

**Q.2) Highlight the Issues associated with the groundwater extraction in India. Also, suggest some steps to manage the ground water level in India.**

**Live Mint**

**Introduction:** Contextual introduction.

**Body:** Explain some issues associated with the groundwater extraction. Also write some steps to manage the ground water level in India.

**Conclusion:** Write a way forward.

Groundwater plays an important role in increasing food and agricultural production, providing safe drinking water and facilitating industrial development in India. It contributes

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fresh water to meet the requirements of nearly 65% of irrigated area, which caters to nearly 85% of rural drinking water and 50% of urban drinking water needs. India is the **largest user of Groundwater** (GW) and 87% of GW is used for Irrigation.

### Issues associated with the groundwater extraction:

- As the depleting groundwater levels lower the water table, the user has to look into deep to extract water. This will **increase cost for water extraction**.
- Groundwater depletion may **lower the water table** leading to difficulty in extracting groundwater for usage.
- A substantial amount of the water flowing in rivers comes from seepage of groundwater into the streambed. Depletion of groundwater levels may **reduce water flow in such streams**.
- A huge part of Indian agriculture depends on irrigation from groundwater. If groundwater availability faces difficulties then there will be **hindrances in agricultural production** leading to a shortage of food.

### Measures to manage the ground water level in India:

- **Dedicated law:** There is no central law governing the use of groundwater and various States have their own laws on regulating its extraction that are deployed in a perfunctory manner.
- A draft **National Water Policy** has recommended a shift in usage from water-guzzling crops and prioritising recycled over freshwater for industrial purposes.
- To improve the water table in those areas where it is being overused, on-farm water management techniques and **improved irrigation methods** should be adopted. E.g. Methods for artificial recharge of groundwater.
- **Traditional methods of water conservation** should be encouraged to minimize the depletion of water resources. E.g., water from the house runoff is an excellent source of irrigation.
- The **agricultural power-pricing structure** needs to be revamped as the flat rate of electricity adversely affects the use of groundwater.
- There should be a policy in place to monitor the excessive exploitation of groundwater resources to ensure long-term sustainability. E.g. **Water meters** could be installed to monitor overuse.

Groundwater depletion is becoming an alarming issue day by day. Leveraging **schemes like Atal Bhujal Yojana** which seeks to strengthen the institutional framework and bring about behavioural changes at the community level for sustainable groundwater resource management is vital.

**Q.3) Neglecting existing regulations and establishing a new framework would undermine the considerable effort invested in their creation. Discuss the statement, with a special focus on data protection mechanisms in India.**

### The Hindu

**Introduction:** Contextual introduction.

**Body:** Explain significance of new data protection mechanism. Also write some concerns.

**Conclusion:** Write a way forward.

India needs a proper data protection policy because India, with over 820 million internet users, soon to touch 1.2 billion. The Union Government has released the fourth iteration of a data protection law in India, now called the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022. The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018, was proposed by the **Justice Srikrishna Committee**.

### Significance:

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- **Cross border data flows:** The DPDP Bill, 2022 allows for cross border data flow to “countries and territories” notified by the Central government.
- **Regulatory framework:** the current draft considerably reduces the scope of the proposed Data Protection Board of India (DPB). Out of the 22 clauses in the DPDP Bill, the Central government has been provided with rule making power in around 14 clauses.
- **Disempowering the data principals:** it does not allow them to seek compensation from data fiduciaries for harms they have suffered due to unlawful processing.
- **Penalties:** the quantum of penalties that can be imposed, with the cap being placed at ₹500 crore, are of a much higher magnitude than provided for under the PDP Bill, 2019. It places **duties on data principals**.
- The bill recognises the **data principal’s right to postmortem privacy** (Withdraw Consent) which was missing from the PDP Bill, 2019.

### Concerns:

- **Age of digital consent** continues to be 18. It would result in **unequal access to the internet** and, finally, requiring consent from parents would hamper autonomous development of children.
- It does not provide for the **right of data portability** which empowered data principals and enhanced competition to increase consumer welfare.
- It **subsumes the right to be forgotten under the right to erasure**. This compromises on the right to freedom of speech and expression of other individuals.
- Moreover, the DPDP Bill, 2022 **fails to provide adequate legislative guidance** for framing these rules. This leads to the concern of excessive delegation of legislation.
- Unlike previous drafts and most data protection legislation around the world, the Bill makes **no mention of the time limit**.
- The Central government **exercises greater control** over the proposed Data Protection Board of India (DPB) because it will appoint members of the DPB.
- The first part allows the Bill to fill in any regulatory gaps, but the second part raises concerns about **sectoral regulations** that may go beyond what the Bill provides.

The exemption provided under the Bill should be “just, fair, reasonable and proportionate procedure”. So, providing greater power to the government as opposed to an independent statutory authority, need to be re-examined.

### Q.4) Discuss the effectiveness of Blended finance as an investment tool to fill investment gaps to meet SDGs.

#### Live mint

**Introduction:** Contextual introduction.

**Body:** Explain significance of Blended finance as an investment tool to fill investment gaps to meet SDGs. Also write some challenges.

**Conclusion:** Write a way forward.

Blended finance is the **strategic use of development finance for the mobilisation of additional finance** towards sustainable development in developing countries. It facilitates the flow of new capital into high-impact sectors such as agriculture. Global crises like **climate change and food insecurity** can be handled using blended finance.

#### Blended finance as an investment tool:

- By using a blend of financing sources, it is possible to tap into a **wider pool of capital** and better match the needs of the project. For example, equity investments may be used to **finance high-risk projects** that traditional lenders would be unwilling to finance.

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- In addition, blended financing can **provide much-needed flexibility** when it comes to repayments and interest rates. **Reduces dependency** on government debt and sovereign guarantees.
- By aligning the interests of different investors, blended finance structures can help to ensure that projects deliver on their social and environmental objectives, as well as their financial returns.
- In the agriculture sector, blended finance can be used to **support smallholder farmers**, rural infrastructure projects, and agricultural value chains.
- Innovative blending can support **project preparation and solve information gaps**, enabling investment in multiple projects.
- **Reduces the risk premium** through co-financing and co-investment Investments that drive social, environmental and economic progress.

### Challenges:

- The idea of providing financial returns to risk investors has not been adopted widely by the development sector community.
- There is a **lack of financial intermediation** in the blended finance market and addressing the SDG investment gap more generally.
- Representation from governments is crucial to scaling blended finance. The blended finance structures such as SIBs require a shift to **outcome-based funding**.
- The tendering process involved in creating structures such as SIBs creates **delays in structuring** blended finance transactions.
- A blended finance solution's **design and contracting time is typically higher** than traditional grants or pure commercial investment.
- Concessional capital providers and private investors do not **disclose data on financial performance** due to confidentiality concerns.

As the world economy continues to globalise, the need for blended financing has become increasingly apparent.

### Q.5) Discuss the significance and potential of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

#### The Hindu

**Introduction:** Contextual introduction.

**Body:** Explain significance and potential of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

**Conclusion:** Write a way forward.

Digital public infrastructure (DPI) refers to blocks or platforms such as digital identification, payment infrastructure and data exchange solutions that help countries deliver essential services. India through **India Stack** became the first country to develop all three foundational DPis digital identity (Aadhar), real-time fast payment (UPI) and a platform to safely share personal data without compromising privacy.

#### **Significance of India's DPI:**

- DPI has emerged as the **most feasible model due to its low cost, interoperability** and scalable design, and because of its safeguards against monopolies and digital colonisation.
- It enabled Aadhaar to become the rocket ship for launching **good governance in India**. Currently, over 1,700 Union and State government schemes use Aadhaar.
- Aadhaar holders can voluntarily use their **Aadhaar for private sector purposes**, and regulated entities can store Aadhaar numbers using secure vaults.
- **UPI** has now transacts a value of \$180 billion a month, or about a staggering **65% of India's GDP per annum**. This is greater than the combined digital payments volumes of the US, UK, Germany and France and equals 55 per cent of India's GDP.

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- India kicked off its first **cross-border real-time payment system** by integrating UPI with Singapore's PayNow to enable low-cost cross-border payments.
- **e-RUPI, E-Way Bill, and TReDS** for MSMEs have ensured real value for money to consumers while reducing the compliance burden for producers.

### Potential of India's DPI:

- It can unlock various services such as **DigiYatra**, which offers a free biometric-enabled seamless travel experience through facial recognition systems, and **DigiLocker**, which has six billion stored documents.
- India's DPI is fuelling its thriving **start-up ecosystem**. Start-ups have leveraged open networks for consent-based verification of identity (Aadhaar), settlement of payments United Payments Interface (UPI), sharing of financial data.
- UPI has been a major tailwind for **tech innovation and investment** into India.
- UPI is already in use or running pilots in 12+ other nations, and multiple other countries have expressed interest in the various APIs of India Stack. This opens a **USD 500 billion global cross-border payments market**, for any Indian companies building financial services on top of these rails.
- India's DPI can add around 60-100 basis points (BPS) to India's **potential GDP growth rate**.
- The platforms will **democratise digital payments**, enable interoperability, and bring down transaction costs. This could potentially transform how businesses and consumers interact at present.

DPI has emerged as the new backbone of India's economy, propelling it towards the goal of achieving a \$25 trillion economy by the 100th year of India's political independence.

### Q.6) SMART PDS scheme goes beyond just ration distribution. It will allow greater accountability across government schemes. Discuss

#### Indian Express

**Introduction:** Contextual introduction.

**Body:** Explain significance of SMART PDS scheme.

**Conclusion:** Write a way forward.

It is a system where **smart ration cards** are issued to beneficiaries of the Public Distribution System (PDS) and ration is given through fair price shops on the production of the smart ration card by any member of the beneficiary family. The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA), governs the country's largest beneficiary-centric programme.

#### **Significance of SMART PDS scheme:**

- The fingerprint template of the beneficiary is recorded in these smart ration cards, which **record all transactions**.
- The lack of credible and dynamic data on **consumption and mobility patterns** was always a big challenge for planners. This scheme will go a long way in addressing this deficit.
- It was felt that the data generated can be leveraged for the delivery of many other central schemes and welfare programmes like e-Shram Portal, Ayushman Bharat, and PM-SVANidhi Yojana.
- Convergence and integration with the use of AI can really be a game changer for people as well as governments in **bringing accountability** across all programmes.
- There will be a standardisation of the PDS operation through the **use of technology and integrating the same with FCI, CWC, transport supply chain** of rail and road, Ministry of Education, Women and Child Development and UIDAI.

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- Technology-led reforms are expected to **overcome the state-level technological limitations** of PDS operations concerning IT hardware, software and technical manpower.
- This will also institutionalise an **integrated central system** for all PDS-related operations across all states/UTs.
- The initiative focuses on **streamlining the supply chain** from procurement to distribution by incorporating technology-driven solutions, such as electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices, real-time monitoring, and tracking systems.

The transformative potential of SMART-PDS goes beyond food security, enabling data-driven decision-making, convergence, and integration with AI for improved delivery of central schemes and welfare programs across India.

**Q.7) Discuss the importance of the limitations of judicial powers with respect to executive Policy matters.**

### Indian Express

**Introduction:** Contextual introduction.

**Body:** Explain the importance of the limitations of judicial powers with respect to executive Policy matters.

**Conclusion:** Write a way forward.

The doctrine of **separation of powers** (part of the basic structure) implies that each pillar of democracy – the executive, legislature and the judiciary – perform separate functions and act as separate entities. The executive is vested with the power to make policy decisions and implement laws. The judiciary is responsible for adjudicating disputes. The Constitution permits the judiciary to perform an **advisory role** in very limited circumstances and that too only when sought for.

### **Importance of the limitations of judicial powers:**

- Such power has limitations which must respect the **institutional independence and competence** of such organs.
- The doctrine of separation of power facilitates **participative democracy in letter and spirit**. It facilitates the **right of the public** to give effect to its will through the legislature.
- The matters of reform are constitutionally reserved for the **“State” as defined in Article 12**, which includes only the legislature and the executive but not the judiciary.
- The existence of a formidable majority is proof of a clear **mandate from the people** which must be respected, and interfered with only when the Constitution is undermined by the executive.
- In many cases, courts are often **ill-equipped and lack experience** to weigh the economic, environmental and political costs involved like liquor ban case.
- The executive remains **“accountable”** to the people through 5 year election process but judges exercise self-regulation and are insulated from any external control and thus accountable only to themselves, and their own sense of their limits.
- Sometimes when judicial activism is exercised it is done for solely selfish, political or personal reasons.
- Frequent overreach signals executive inactivity and incompetency which reduces the trust people pose in the Parliament and elected representatives.

Judiciary is expected to maintain its primary allegiance to the law and the Constitution i.e. to the text of legal instruments and legal interpretation, and to the body of judicial precedents.



**Q.8) How government aims to achieve export promotion with the help of India's Foreign Trade Policy, 2023?**

**Indian Express**

**Introduction:** Contextual introduction.

**Body:** Explain how government aims to achieve export promotion with the help of India's Foreign Trade Policy, 2023.

**Conclusion:** Write a way forward.

A trade policy is a government policy that affects the number of goods and services a country exports and imports. Recently, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry has launched the **Foreign Trade Policy 2023** to enhance the competitiveness of Indian exports in the global market (India's overall exports are about to reach US \$760 billion this year)

Government aims to achieve export promotion with the help of India's Foreign Trade Policy, 2023 in following ways:

- The focus of the new policy is on providing **automatic approvals for various permissions**. For instance, the **processing time for revalidation** of various authorisations, which currently ranges from three days to one month, is expected to be brought down to one day.
- Further, a **one-time amnesty scheme** has been introduced that aims at faster resolution of trade disputes.
- Four new towns (Faridabad, Mirzapur, Moradabad, and Varanasi) have been designated as Towns of Export Excellence (TEE). The TEEs will have priority access to export promotion funds under the MAI scheme. It will **boost the exports of handlooms, handicrafts, and carpets**.
- The FTP aims at building partnerships with State governments and taking forward the **Districts as Export Hubs (DEH) initiative**. This would promote exports at the district level and accelerate the development of grassroots trade ecosystem.
- A **robust export control system** in India would provide access of dual-use High end goods and technologies to Indian exporters while facilitating exports of controlled items/technologies under SCOMET from India.
- DTA (Domestic Tariff Area) units can **access the Advance Authorization Scheme** for duty-free import of raw materials for manufacturing export items, and it can be used for domestic and export production.
- The FTP 2023 has introduced provisions for **merchanting trade**, which allows the shipment of goods from one foreign country to another foreign country without touching Indian ports, involving an Indian intermediary. This is expected to allow Indian entrepreneurs to convert certain places into major merchanting hubs.

The new policy needs to be supplemented with other measures to boost the country's trade performance. These range from **lowering import tariffs and ensuring a competitive exchange rate to signing broader and deeper free trade agreements**.