



Mains Marathon
Compilation

March 2023

Mains Marathon Compilation for the Month of March, 2023

- 1. In the light of the recent events, highlight the implications of acting against the Non-Government Organisations.**
- 2. Rejuvenating primary care is essential and Ayurveda graduates can contribute enormously towards this rejuvenation if trained properly. In the light of the statement, discuss the challenges faced by Ayurveda practitioners.**
- 3. India's relationship with Germany has traditionally lagged behind its relations with other European countries. In the light of the statement, discuss the significance of a strong India-Germany relation.**
- 4. The Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has been a game changer for exports from India. Substantiate.**
- 5. Do you think, this is an optimal way to conserve India's grasslands?**
- 6. Increased adoption of the railways for cargo movement is crucial to improve the country's logistics competitiveness. In the light of the statement, highlight the significance of the railways for India's logistics.**
- 7. What is the strategic and economic significance of India-Australia relations? Also, highlight the hurdles to strengthening relations.**
- 8. Throw light upon the evolving regulatory framework for crypto assets in India.**
- 9. Highlight the significance and challenges of Saudi Arabia-Iran reconciliation, with a special focus on India.**
- 10. What is Silicon Valley Bank Crisis? How would it impact the Indian Economy?**
- 11. Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture (DEPA) has the potential to improve data protection and privacy for citizens, however, there are also risks associated with it. Examine**
- 12. India has started building a holistic naval base on Great Nicobar Island. Discuss its strategic significance.**
- 13. India's policy push for self-reliant manufacturing and green growth can deliver big benefits once logistical efficiency goes up. Elaborate.**
- 14. AUKUS will trigger multiple strategic consequences for Asia, including India. Substantiate.**
- 15. A multi-pronged approach across enhancing employability, sport for leadership, and bodily autonomy is the key to strengthening leadership abilities among adolescent girls. Elaborate.**
- 16. Vibrant Village Programme will bring remote and border villages into the national mainstream, and make them more developed and self-sufficient. Examine.**
- 17. Highlight the significance and challenges associated with allowing e-postal ballots for overseas Indian voters.**
- 18. Critically examine the "national champions" model for infrastructure development.**
- 19. Discuss the need to overhaul the mechanisms to tackle rising disinformation in India.**
- 20. Highlight the government initiatives to protect the fast-growing digital economy.**

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21. **Universal Health Care must encompass primary, secondary, and tertiary care for all who need it, and at affordable cost without discrimination. Examine the statement.**
22. **Rising import restrictions may put FTAs and global value chain integration at risk; external imbalances can be addressed with other foreign trade policy tools. Discuss.**
23. **IPCC report points to the higher risk India's indigenous groups face & the value of local knowledge. Elaborate on the statement.**
24. **Extreme heat as climate change worsens could adversely impact our economic output unless we adopt mitigative measures. Discuss**
25. **Do you think that the old pension scheme is a regressive redistribution mechanism that favours a better-off class? Give reasons in favour of your arguments.**
26. **Highlight the importance of the High Seas Treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of resources in the open oceans.**
27. **Why is the government encouraging semiconductor manufacturing in India?**
28. **Highlight the challenges posed by the stray dog crisis in India. Also, suggest some measures to tackle this crisis.**
29. **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**
30. **Highlight the Issues associated with the groundwater extraction in India. Also, suggest some steps to manage the ground water level in India.**
31. **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.**
32. **Discuss the effectiveness of Blended finance as an investment tool to fill investment gaps to meet SDGs.**
33. **Discuss the significance and potential of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).**
34. **SMART PDS scheme goes beyond just ration distribution. It will allow greater accountability across government schemes. Discuss**
35. **Discuss the importance of the limitations of judicial powers with respect to executive Policy matters.**
36. **How government aims to achieve export promotion with the help of India's Foreign Trade Policy, 2023?**

Q.1) In the light of the recent events, highlight the implications of acting against the Non-Government Organisations.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain some implications of acting against the Non-Government Organisations.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) was enacted to regulate foreign donations and to ensure that such contributions do not adversely affect internal security. It is applicable to **all associations, groups, and NGOs** which intend to receive foreign donations. It is mandatory for all such NGOs to register themselves under the FCRA. Recently the Government of India suspended the FCRA licence of the country's premier think tank, the Centre for Policy Research (CPR).

Implications of acting against NGOs:

- Collaboration with the world requires the flow of information, personnel and funds in both directions. Along with public funding, private and philanthropic funding are **essential for India to continuously expand** its knowledge horizons in all fields.
- The action against the CPR **lowers the bar of tolerance** for the political establishment to an abysmal level.
- Improving education and tribal welfare is part of the list of activities under **corporate social responsibility** mandates. Restrictions on NGOs might create confusion about the status of corporate programmes in which they have invested money.
- NGOs have to prove that their work does not qualify as harmful to **“public interest” or “national security”**. The 2020 amendment of FCRA has left these terms undefined and ambiguous. This may lead to **subjective interpretations** on the part of MHA officials.
- The enhanced compliance formalities have resulted in the closure of many NGOs and the **livelihood loss** of people working in them. For instance, the capping of administrative expenditure at 20% has made them unviable. This is especially true for NGOs hiring professionals like lawyers and doctors who charge hefty fees for their services.
- Many prominent NGOs like Amnesty International, Greenpeace India, etc. have lost their FCRA licenses in the past few years. Many of these NGOs work in **very critical fields** and most often where state helps fails to reach, like pollution and climate change issues, human rights, child labour and human slavery. They, therefore, have a strong impact **on the progress of the nation and welfare of the poor**.

Civil society supplements government works and works at the grass-roots level. They should be given due freedom and autonomy to support the needs of communities.

Q.2) Rejuvenating primary care is essential and Ayurveda graduates can contribute enormously towards this rejuvenation if trained properly. In the light of the statement, discuss the challenges faced by Ayurveda practitioners.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain some challenges faced by Ayurveda practitioners.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

Ayurveda is also called traditional system of Indian medicine. Ayurvedic medicine is an example of a well-organized system of traditional health care, both preventive and curative. Ayurvedic knowledge originated in India more than 5,000 years ago and is often called the **“Mother of All Healing”**. Most material relating to the health and diseases are available in Atharva veda.

Challenges faced by Ayurveda practitioners:

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- There is **limited practical usability** of ancient medical wisdom taught in college training.
- There is a **trust-deficit** about the soundness of Ayurvedic theories and the fruitfulness of its practices. A major reason for this trust-deficit is its **diminished evidence-based quality**. Practitioners resort to gimmickry and publicity, due to general trust deficit. It is harmful for genuine Ayurveda physicians.
- Though the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) has implemented various educational regulations to ensure minimum standards of education, there has been a mushroom growth of **sub-standard colleges** causing erosion to the standards of education.
- Ayurveda does not have a vibrant ecosystem of science and research. A poor practitioner has to **depend on himself** to discover treatments and approaches that actually work.
- The process involves a lot of trial and error with patients and predictably leads to an erosion of the practitioner's reputation.
- Most States **prohibit the practice of modern medicine** by Ayurveda graduates and, consequently, the practitioner finds himself crippled again.
- The Ayurveda establishment has **failed to keep pace with the intellectual and scientific advances** of the times. Ayurveda treatments are slow to heal is another common view that characterizes the public image of Ayurveda.

A statutory decision should be taken to allow Ayurveda graduates to practice modern medicine in stipulated primary care areas. There is need for sincerity, straight-thinking, and some adventurism on the part of stakeholders.

Q.3) India's relationship with Germany has traditionally lagged behind its relations with other European countries. In the light of the statement, discuss the significance of a strong India-Germany relation.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain some issues in India-Germany relationship. Also write significance of a strong India-Germany relation.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The bilateral relations between India and Germany are founded on **common democratic principles**.

India was amongst the first countries to establish diplomatic ties with the Federal Republic of Germany after the Second World War. Germany is **India's largest trading partner in Europe** and 2nd most important partner in terms of technological collaborations.

Issues in India-Germany relationship:

- India's position on the **Russian invasion of Ukraine**, abstention on critical votes on the war and continued **economic engagement** like cheap crude import has attracted criticism from the West.
- The convergence of interests to protect democratic values is not a strong binding chord between India and Germany. For example, India has adopted pragmatism on dealing with Myanmar's junta.
- India has **territorial conflicts** with China. Despite the lack of German trust in China, there exists **economic interdependence**.
- There is a problem of the **lack of a separate bilateral investment treaty** between the two countries. Germany has a Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) with India via EU.
- The lack of understanding of each other's strategic cultures and domestic politics.

Significance of a strong India-Germany relation:

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- **Economy:** Germany is **India's largest economic partner** in the European Union (EU).
- **Clean energy and green technologies:** It has emerged as the central pillar in the partnership. The Green and Sustainable Development Partnership was launched last year. There exists cooperation in the area of green hydrogen.
- **Mobility and migration:** Germany has shortages of **skilled manpower**; where technically skilled Indians could help plug this gap.
- **Security:** India attempts to **diversify from its military dependence** on Russia. Berlin is also **reassessing its arms exports policy**. Germany could become an important defence partner for India. Germany's intent to enhance its **strategic involvement in the Indo-Pacific** through greater military deployment.
- As ties with Russia and China are uncertain, Europe is prioritising **values based partnerships with like-minded countries**. It can advance India-German cooperation.
- A recent agreement on **India-Germany triangular cooperation** involves development projects in third countries.

In times of shifting geopolitical alliances and realignments, India and Germany can emerge as important poles in shaping the new world order.

Q.4) The Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has been a game changer for exports from India. Substantiate.

Indian Express

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain how Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has been a game changer for exports from India.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The PLI Scheme was launched as a **part of the National Policy on Electronics 2019** to give incentives of 4-6% to electronic companies. The PLI is an innovative scheme that provides incentives in terms of cash to various companies for enhancing their **domestic manufacturing** apart from focusing on reducing import bills and improving the cost competitiveness of local goods.

A game changer for exports from India:

- It has not only transformed India into a **manufacturing hub** but has also curtailed its burgeoning trade deficit in electronics and other manufactured goods.
- Electronics manufacturing attracted a massive investment and its exports have grown rapidly by **over 55 percent annually**. Exports of mobile phones alone may reach \$10 billion during the current financial year.
- India witnessed an unprecedented **growth of 45 percent with exports** touching \$422 billion in 2021-22. It has been able to attract 22 top companies, including Apple and Samsung mobile phones in the electronics manufacturing segment.
- Despite global economic woes, **India's overall exports, merchant and services combined, grew at 17.33 percent** to \$641 billion during April-January 2022-23 compared to \$547 billion during the same period last year.
- With 97% of mobile phones sold in India now being made in India. Furthermore, they are also being **"Made in India for the World"** as we witness a sharp growth in smartphones exports by 139% over the last three years.
- Similar successes are replicated in the **pharmasector PLI with 35 imported active pharmaceutical ingredients** or key chemical inputs for drugs being developed in India.
- In addition, other sectors, such as food products, telecom and networking products, and drones are reporting successes with visible growth in investment, employment, and production.

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- Over 600 foreign and domestic firms have been selected across 14 key sectors in two years, indicating enthusiastic industry participation.

It is expected that, over the next five years, a manufacturing capacity of over \$150 billion and exports of \$100 billion will be tied up through the PLI scheme. Further, the government needs to rectify the challenges faced by Indian firms in manufacturing.

The cheetah re-introduction programme has a larger goal of improving India's grasslands.

Q.5) Do you think, this is an optimal way to conserve India's grasslands?

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain how cheetah re-introduction programme is an optimal way to conserve India's grasslands. Also write some challenges.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The **Cheetah Reintroduction project** aims to establish a viable cheetah metapopulation in India that allows the cheetah to perform its functional role as a top predator and provide space for the expansion of the cheetah within its historic range thereby contributing to its global conservation efforts. India has translocated 8 African cheetahs from Namibia and 12 from South Africa.

An optimal way to conserve India's grasslands:

- It is a **grassland-based species**. In saving the cheetah other species which are grassland based and endangered are also saved.
- Cheetahs do indicate the overall wellness of open areas, meadows and grasslands and the ungulate populations (deer and chinkara)/cheetahs' usual prey.
- So, the health of the cheetah population does count as a surrogate marker of the health of the grasslands.
- As it has been seen in the case of tigers (The Project Tiger 1973), there has been a remarkable increase in the tiger reserves from 9 to 53. Therefore, it is expected that reintroduction of cheetahs will also help in the improvement of the ecosystem.

Challenges of cheetah re-introduction programme:

- Cheetahs may not help in restoring grasslands until India addresses other issues. For example, The Wasteland Atlas of India still categorises large stretches of open natural ecosystems as wasteland.
- Renewable energy projects are granted large tracts of open natural ecosystems, to establish solar panels. The level of **human presence is high** in these grassland.
- **Lack of sufficient prey** in Kuno National Park(KNP) was a "concerning" situation.
- The **carrying capacity of the ecosystem** is limited. There have been no proper studies about it.
- The increase in species and their numbers may lead to **more human-animal conflicts**.
- There is a **lack of suitable habitats** of sufficient size for them. In the best of habitats like Kenya and Tanzania, cheetahs exist in very low densities of around 1 per 100 sq km. The area of KNP is only 748 sq kms. It can at best accommodate only 10 Cheetahs.
- The 21 cheetahs that are projected after 15 years, that too at one site is **insufficient to conserve grassland**.
- Confining the animal to one Protected Area increases its **vulnerability to epidemics**.

Cheetah conservation can be used for consolidation of grassland and shrubland that are decaying. **Eco-tourism along with conservation can be promoted**. However, there is also a need to address the challenge associated with it because there have been experiences that people over do it.

Q.6) Increased adoption of the railways for cargo movement is crucial to improve the country's logistics competitiveness. In the light of the statement, highlight the significance of the railways for India's logistics.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain the significance of the railways for India's logistics.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

Logistics includes all activities of the supply chain such as transportation, warehousing, packaging, inventory management, the flow of information, order processing and customer service. To increase the share of the railways in freight movement from 27% to 45% and increasing freight movement from 1.2 billion tonnes to 3.3 billion tonnes, by 2030, **PM Gati Shakti** provides the right platform to address the infrastructural challenges that have hampered the movement of freight by rail.

Significance of the railways for India's logistics:

- Trains are not just the safest way to transport freight - they are also green and among the most **energy-efficient** mode of transportation. Because they generate up to 80% less CO₂ and consume 75-90% less energy for freight traffic than road transport.
- Currently, Indian roadways handle 70 per cent freight when compared to 18 per cent by railways. So an increased burden on roads causes significant congestion, increased pollution, and resultant logistics cost escalations.
- **Freight movement cost** is the highest in the road sector- nearly twice the rail cost.
- A robust rail network will augment the transportation system that will attract more investment in India. This will **aid in enhancing the current manufacturing capacity** of the nation.
- A commodity mix that has a high share of bulk goods is suitable for rail's bulk-handling capabilities.
- Freight travel is often over longer distances which is suitable to rail's economies of scale relative to road transport.
- India has a low coast-to-landmass ratio. Between the two low carbon freight modes, rail and coastal, India's geography makes rail **more feasible** in many areas of the country as compared to coastal.

The Railways offer an efficient and economic mode of logistics movement given their pan-India network, and can play an important role in enabling a coordinated and integrated logistics system.

Q.7) What is the strategic and economic significance of India-Australia relations? Also, highlight the hurdles to strengthening relations.

Indian Express

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain how strategic and economic significance of India-Australia relations. Also write some hurdles to strengthening relations.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

India-Australia, both nations have much in common, underpinned by shared values of **pluralistic, Westminster-style democracies, Commonwealth traditions**, expanding economic engagement and increasing high level interaction. Both the countries are part of QUAD, G20, WTO, ISA etc. regional and multilateral initiatives.

Strategic significance:

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- **Indo-Pacific Stability:** Both nations aspire to a free, open, inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. The establishment of **QUAD grouping** and active participation by both is necessary to counter China's actions in the region.
- **Gateway to Pacific Countries:** like Kiribati, Solomon Islands etc. as Australia enjoys a high degree of influence over them.
- **Upholding International Law:** Both nations believe in **sovereign equality of nations** and progression based on mutual respect and understanding.
- **Geo-Strategic Considerations:** Considering Australia's proximity with the Indian Ocean, active engagement is desired for maintaining India's strong position in the Indian Ocean region. Further, Australia's support is desired for getting membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group and bringing reforms to UNSC.

Economic significance:

- Australia's long-term and secure LNG supply can help diversify India's current highly concentrated import supplies from the Middle East.
- India-Australia Economic Cooperation Trade Agreement (**ECTA**) is expected to increase trade between the two sides to \$45-50 billion over five years, from the current estimate of \$27 billion, and create over 10 lakh additional job opportunities.
- The Australia government has adopted the **India Economic Strategy to 2035**. It aims to set up a **Consulate-General** in Bengaluru in 2023, a **joint Australia-India Centre of Excellence** for Critical and Emerging Technology Policy in Bengaluru.

Hurdles to strengthening relations:

- **Coal mine controversy:** over the Adani coal mine project in Australia, with some activists protesting against it.
- **Visa issues:** There have been concerns over visa restrictions for Indian students and professionals seeking to work in Australia.
- **Russia-Ukraine crisis:** Australia has criticized the Russian invasion of Ukraine and sided with the U.S. and western countries. However, India has refrained from criticizing Russia over the issue. This can create differences in bilateral discourse and the functioning of QUAD.
- **Lack of Uranium Supply:** The progress on uranium supply has been very low, despite efforts from both sides.

Both countries must work together with resolve to shape our economic and strategic environment aimed to ensure collective security and prosperity.

Q.8) Throw light upon the evolving regulatory framework for crypto assets in India.

ToI

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain evolving regulatory framework for crypto assets in India.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

Cryptocurrency enables relatively invisible transactions, with serious implications for crime, terrorism, money laundering, tax evasion, etc. Cryptocurrencies are getting popular because of their underlying technology of **Blockchain**, and due to some of their inherent advantages over fiat currencies, like **faster transactions** and require less or no additional transaction fees and protects users from issues like identity theft.

Evolving regulatory framework for crypto assets in India:

- In February, RBI had asked financial intermediaries it regulates to follow KYC norms and other relevant standards for remittances following transactions in crypto assets.
- The Finance Bill 2022 has promulgated a **new taxation regime for the class of VDAs** including cryptocurrencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs). The gains arising from the transfer of VDAs are proposed to be taxed **at the rate of 30%**. However, the Act did not

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have any provision related to legalizing/banning the cryptocurrencies or any other Digital Asset.

- Under the presidency of India, **G20 Finance Track discussion** has put the regulation of VDAs to curb their use in money laundering and terror financing as a top priority.
- Superapp CryptoWire recently launched **India's first cryptocurrency index, IC15**. It will measure the performance of the 15 most widely traded cryptocurrencies listed on leading crypto exchanges by market capitalization
- In July 2022, rules regarding 1% tax deducted at source on cryptocurrency came into effect.
- Recently, the Finance Ministry has notified that crypto or virtual asset businesses will now be in the **ambit of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)**. It also mandates that crypto exchanges and intermediaries dealing with virtual digital assets (VDAs) must have proper **KYC documentation** for all customers they onboard.

Cryptos need intelligent light-touch regulation. Bans do not work and hurt the exuberant innovation that can throw up valuable products and services. Crypto assets need to be treated as a financial asset with intermediaries required to follow reporting standards.

Q.9) Highlight the significance and challenges of Saudi Arabia-Iran reconciliation, with a special focus on India.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain significance of Saudi Arabia-Iran reconciliation. Also write some challenges.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The enmity between Iran, a Shia-majority theocracy, and Saudi Arabia, a Sunni-majority absolute monarchy, has been one of the dominant drivers of conflicts in the West Asia. Recently, Saudi and Iranian officials held bilateral talks that concluded with **an agreement to restore diplomatic ties** which have been severed since 2016. This major diplomatic breakthrough is negotiated by China in Beijing.

Significance of Saudi Arabia-Iran reconciliation:

- Normalizing ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia could help **stabilize global oil prices** and ensure a consistent supply of oil to India as they are two major oil producers in the world.
- This could open up new avenues for trade and investment, leading to **increased economic opportunities for India**.
- The newly struck diplomatic deal can be a good starting point for **more negotiations and agreements**.
- India has strong economic and strategic interests in the Middle East including International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). Iran is part of India's extended neighbourhood. Any instability in the region can have far-reaching consequences for India.
- **Vision 2030" plan** of Saudi Arabia calls for diversifying the oil-dependent economy by attracting tourism and foreign investment and turning it into a global hub for business and culture.

Challenges:

- Chinese mediation between Iran and Saudi will create challenges for India as it will contribute to **increasing Chinese influence** in the region.

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- Saudi Arabia is wary of the large network of armed militias across West Asia that Iran funds and backs, seeing them as a threat to its own sovereignty as well as the regional balance of power.
- India has also been strengthening its relations with US. Now with **US weakening in the region, it won't be able to help India.**
- **I2U2** (Israel-India-UAE-US) or “**quad of the middle east**” may render dysfunctional with the isolation of UAE and Israel.

Saudi Arabia, Iran and China should be mindful of the pitfalls ahead and continue to build on the momentum created now to achieve a cold peace between the two regional powers.

Q.10) What is Silicon Valley Bank Crisis? How would it impact the Indian Economy?

Live mint

Introduction: Explain Silicon Valley Bank Crisis.

Body: Explain how it would impact the Indian Economy.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

Silicon Valley Bank is a financial institution that provides banking services to the technology industry and venture capital firms. Founded in 1983, it has since become the go-to bank for startups and entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley and beyond. SVB's crash may be the **Lehman moment for the start-up and venture capital ecosystem**. It was known to be one of the most 'founder-friendly bank'.

After the pandemic in 2021, SVB deposits increased. SVB invested heavily in US government bonds. A spike in interest rates has led to a sell-off in bonds, leaving banks exposed to potential losses on the securities they hold. The bank failed after depositors- mostly technology workers and venture capital-backed companies began withdrawing their money in panic. Hence, it ended up **being shut down by regulators**.

Impact on the Indian Economy:

- **Boom for emerging markets:** A fall in US bond yields typically improves the appeal of higher-yielding fixed-income assets in emerging markets.
- **Bring corporates back to India:** Falling US dollar rates coupled with SVB Crisis might bring back big corporates in India, who had shifted to overseas lending due to depreciation in Indian National Rupee (INR) against the US dollar.
- Many Indian start-ups especially in the SaaS (Software as a Service) sector not only have accounts, but the bank had also been an important lender. For example, an investment of a total of \$1.7 million in One97 Communications, the parent company of Paytm.
- The failure of SVB is likely to have a **ripple effect on Indian startups**, many of which have significant amounts of funds deposited with the bank. This could lead to a **cash crunch for many companies**, which may be forced to cut costs, delay projects, or lay off employees.
- SVB has been a major player in the Indian startup ecosystem, providing banking services and funding to many of the country's most successful startups, including Flipkart, Ola, and Zomato.
- SVB has also been instrumental in helping Indian startups expand into the US market, by providing them with the necessary infrastructure and support to set up operations in Silicon Valley.

Indian startups that have funds deposited with SVB may consider diversifying their banking relationships. This may involve opening accounts with multiple banks, or exploring alternative banking services such as digital banks or fintech start-ups.

Q.11) Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture (DEPA) has the potential to improve data protection and privacy for citizens, however, there are also risks associated with it. Examine

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain significance of Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture. Also write some risks associated with it.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The objective of Data Empowerment & Protection Architecture (DEPA) is to provide the tools and utilities to build systems that can provide the user with mechanisms for protecting and sharing their data. It was launched by the **NITI Aayog** on the premise that individuals themselves are the best judges of the 'right' uses of their personal data.

Significance of DEPA in ensuring data protection:

- It is designed as an evolvable framework for good data governance that empowers people to seamlessly and securely access their data and share it with third-party institutions.
- DEPA will be **empowering individuals with control over their personal data**, by operationalising a regulatory, institutional, and technology design for secure data sharing.
- It has been designed as a mechanism that goes beyond data protection through a **Privacy Enhancement Technology (PET)** to ensure data empowerment by facilitating smooth and secure data flow.
- The **user can determine the terms of data flow** such as the scope and duration of data sharing and can revoke the same.
- It **separates consent collection from data flow**. The "consent to collect" by a data user does not include "consent to share".
- The **Consent Managers are data-blind** themselves, as they do not store the data of users and merely act as a conduit
- This users' control over data not only results in **increased competition but also fosters innovation**.

There are also following risks associated with it:

- India still does not have a **data protection regulation**. In the absence of a legal framework this technological solution could undermine the right to privacy under Article 21 of the constitution.
- If the consent management tool is not properly implemented or managed, there is a risk that personal information could be **misused or misappropriated**. E.g., in health sector, sensitive medical information could be misused or exploited for commercial purposes.
- An implementation may be inconsistent across different sectors and jurisdictions which may undermine effectiveness and create confusion among citizens.

The crafting of the country's data governance must enable a secure, more egalitarian, and trustworthy digital future for all.

Q.12) India has started building a holistic naval base on Great Nicobar Island. Discuss its strategic significance.

Indian Express

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain strategic significance of a naval base on Great Nicobar Island.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

Great Nicobar is the **southernmost of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**. Recently, the Government of India has begun to build a holistic naval base on Great Nicobar Island, which stands squarely overlooking the entrance to the Malacca Straits, and is barely 90 miles from the tip of Indonesia.

Strategic significance:

- A naval base in Great Nicobar would be the **central piece to an oceanic strategy**, to offer a counter attack to **Chinese aggression** in the Himalayas. It helps to control on China's extended neck stretching far out into the Indian Ocean, far westward to Djibouti and Gwadar.
- India can take the advantages by its maritime geography as **China's Indian Ocean lines of communications imports over 65 per cent of its oil dependency**.
- The tactical scenario in the Malacca Straits and South China Sea is already dominated by the intelligence sharing and communications agreements of the Quad. In times of crisis, these agreements would be activated, and India would be the beneficiary of the entire tactical picture in the **Indian Ocean and South China Sea**.
- An aggressive Chinese move on the northern LAC would be countered by a threat to China-bound tankers in the Malacca Straits.
- Operating from the new base in Great Nicobar, Indian fighter aircraft directed by own air early warning aircraft would clamp down **information dominance over the Malacca Straits**.
- A full-fledged Pearl Harbour that will be the Indian outpost of the to-be-set-up eastern theatre command, which is strong enough to deter the Chinese risking escalation with India.
- 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.
- With access to the Malacca Straits in Indian hands, plans of China to operate an aircraft carrier in support of Djibouti and base it in Gwadar would be better handled.

The strategic importance of Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is ever increasing to the world order in general and Indian sub-continent in particular. A secure IOR is key to ensuring security of India's national interests. Given its physical location, the A&N Islands are the natural platform for collaboration between India and Southeast Asia.

Q.13) India's policy push for self-reliant manufacturing and green growth can deliver big benefits once logistical efficiency goes up. Elaborate.

Live mint

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain significance of logistics for manufacturing and green growth. Also write some challenges.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The **World Bank Logistics Performance Index** 2018 had ranked India 44th out of 160 nations. China and Vietnam did better than India with 26th and 39th ranks

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respectively. Initiatives like PM Gati Shakti and the National Logistics Policy lay a foundation for India to seize its opportunity to become an integral part of global supply chains.

Significance of logistics for manufacturing and green growth:

- **Lower logistics costs** will make Indian businesses more competitive and help push up exports, which can become an important driver of growth and employment generation over the medium term. For instance, a 10% reduction in logistics costs is estimated to push up exports by 5-8%.
- The implementation of **digital solutions like FastTag for road traffic** has brought about an estimated reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of nearly 1 million tonnes. Projects like these will help India reach its stated climate ambitions even faster.
- Cloud-based IT systems, integration and coordination among Indian logistical service suppliers and the signing up of small service providers also increase efficiency.
- **Inland waterways** provide a **cost-efficient and environment-friendly** way to move goods. Inland port development must become a priority for the Government.
- A **technology-driven documentation approach** would highly impact the logistic sector by avoiding transit delays and untimely deliveries caused due to improper documentation.

Challenges:

- **Port Sector Issues:** The turnaround times for ships are high (~62 hours in 2020-21, ~8 hours in Japan). In addition, time consuming custom clearances add to delay.
- **Tax Structure:** Multiple State and Center taxes lead to considerable loss of time in transit on roads.
- **Fuel Costs:** Higher fuel prices increase the transportation costs. Rising fuel prices are increasing the surcharges to the freight tariffs. This reduces profitability of the logistics sector.
- **Government Regulations:** Carriers face significant compliance regulations imposed by State Governments and local authorities. It causes time overruns and disruption in supply chains.
- **Fragmented Sector:** Unorganized players control 90% of the logistics market. Fragmentation leads to low margins which prevents investments to scale-up operations or adoption of new efficient digital technologies.
- Waterways have a meagre share of ~5%. The higher logistics cost is leading to a **competitiveness gap** of US\$ 180 billion for India. The difference will increase to US\$ 500 billion by 2030.

India aims to become US\$ 5 Trillion economy in the near term and a developed economy by 2047. For this, connectivity and robust infrastructure will become crucial points.

Q.14) AUKUS will trigger multiple strategic consequences for Asia, including India. Substantiate.

Indian Express

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain some strategic consequences of AUKUS for Asia, including India.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

AUKUS is a trilateral security partnership between the **United States of America, Australia, United Kingdom in the Indo-Pacific region**. The UK and the US will help Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines.

Strategic consequences for Asia:

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- According to the Indian Observers, the partnership is much beneficial for India. As India has been at the forefront of rallying a broader coalition of countries in the Indo-Pacific.
- AUKUS is in essence about transforming Australia's strategic capabilities and making it a powerful factor in **shaping the Indo-Pacific regional security environment**.
- AUKUS will see a deeper partnership between the US, UK, and Australia in **developing a range of underwater technologies** to cope with the dramatic expansion of Chinese naval capabilities in the Indo-Pacific.
- The AUKUS also involves collaboration between the three countries in a range of **emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and quantum computing** that will shape regional security scenarios.
- This may also open the door for **greater S&T cooperation between India and Australia** which may eventually expand to cover sensitive strategic areas.
- AUKUS has reinvigorated the idea of an **"Anglosphere"** that speaks of the enduring geopolitical bonds between the US, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. **India is now seeing a rapid expansion of its ties with the English-speaking world.**
- The AUKUS arrangement will look beyond information sharing to the integration of the technological and defence industrial bases of the three countries.
- The US is now **boosting the military capabilities of Japan and South Korea** and seeking to build a deeper partnership with India on strategic technologies.
- AUKUS which is perceived as an anti-China grouping by China may lead to erosion of regional stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Though AUKUS offers the advantage of balance of power, strategic autonomy and a check on Chinese aggression, it also has significant challenges as it has been termed as Indo-Pacific NATO. Hence, to progress with consultations and collaborations will be a prudent way forward.

Q.15) A multi-pronged approach across enhancing employability, sport for leadership, and bodily autonomy is the key to strengthening leadership abilities among adolescent girls. Elaborate.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain significance of multi-pronged approach in strengthening leadership abilities among adolescent girls.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

Today the world is home to a transformative generation of 900 million adolescent girls and young women. They would become the largest segment of women leaders, change makers, entrepreneurs, and innovators in history if provided with resources and opportunities. By offering equal opportunity to women, India could add an estimated \$770 billion to its GDP by 2025.

Multi-pronged approach in strengthening leadership abilities among adolescent girls:

- 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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- 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.
- Women need to be **empowered to make decisions** about their bodies. They should have freedom to decide about their sexual choices. They also need to be free from all forms of violence and harassment.
- Policies that provide services, **social protection and basic infrastructure** to women and create more paid jobs in the care economy are urgently needed.
- 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** is crucial 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.

The public perception of men as leaders of STEM, finance, and entrepreneurship should be changed. Moreover, maternity leave, flexible work arrangements, childcare facilities in the workplace etc. should be promoted.

Q.16) Vibrant Village Programme will bring remote and border villages into the national mainstream, and make them more developed and self-sufficient. Examine.

Indian Express

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain how Vibrant Village Programme will bring border villages into the national mainstream. Also write some challenges.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

Vibrant Village Programme is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**. It aims to comprehensively develop villages of blocks on the northern border thus improving the quality of life of people living in these villages. The scheme will be implemented in **Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Ladakh**. Vibrant Village Action Plans will be created by the district administration with the help of Gram Panchayats.

How Vibrant Village Programme will bring border villages into the national mainstream?

- It aims to strengthen and **enhance basic infrastructure** in the villages along the LAC. The objective is to address the issue of migration.
- Border villages are provided with all **basic amenities**. It includes modern housing and good roads; water and electricity supply; good education, health and communication facilities; access to Doordarshan channels.
- Tourism potential will be leveraged through the **promotion of local culture and traditional knowledge**.
- It will also develop **sustainable eco-agribusinesses** through the **“One village-One product”** concept.
- The scheme will also develop **growth centres on the “hub-and-spoke model”** through the promotion of social entrepreneurship, empowerment of youth and women through skill development and entrepreneurship.
- The scheme will identify and develop the economic drivers based on local natural human and other resources of the border villages.

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Challenges:

- For decades our border villages remained untouched by development. **China increased its influence** along our borders by rapidly developing its infrastructure and increasing the presence of its army.
- India also suffered similar setbacks along the Pakistan border.
- **Rough and difficult terrain**, tough Weather and Climatic conditions, Seismically active areas in most of the border, inadequate manpower, Red tapism and bureaucratic delays in projects also act as hindrance.
- Terror activities also increased along the Myanmar border.

Proper and defined autonomy with respect to **3F: Funds, Functions and Functionaries** will help to boost the rapid development of border road infra, ultimately leading to economically integrated and strategically amiable border villages.

Q.17) Highlight the significance and challenges associated with allowing e-postal ballots for overseas Indian voters.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain significance and challenges associated with allowing e-postal ballots for overseas Indian voters.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

India has the **largest diaspora population**, with nearly 1.35 crore NRIs spread across the globe. The Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) was **developed by the Election Commission of India with the help of C-DAC** for the use of service voters. This system enables the entitled service voter to cast their vote using an electronically received postal ballot from anywhere outside their constituency.

Significance of e-postal ballots for overseas Indian voters:

- The ETPBS method allowed for **greater turnout** among service voters in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.
- The postal ballot method has been recognised as **a means to allow overseas voters to exercise their right**.
- **Time constraint** involved in dispatch of postal ballot **has been addressed** using this system, as it sends postal ballots electronically to eligible service voters.
- **Secrecy is maintained** and no duplication of casted ETPB is possible due to the unique quick response code.
- This is also a **more trustworthy way of registering mandates** rather than appointing proxies- which is currently allowed for service personnel who are a limited number in each constituency unlike NRIs who could constitute a more substantial chunk among the electorate in some States.

Challenges:

- It could require to overcome **“huge logistical challenges”** and needs “a realistic assessment of requirements” due to massive population of NRIs.
- It may cause monetary constraints.
- Lack of sufficient number of trained personnels.

An effective postal system should ease this process for NRIs. The rules must be clearly framed for eligibility on the basis of time spent away from the country.

Q.18) Critically examine the “national champions” model for infrastructure development.

Indian Express

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain significance of “national champions” model for infrastructure development. Also write some issues.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

According to World Bank report, India has to invest \$55 billion p.a. in urban infra to meet needs of growing population. To meet the growing demand the “national champions” model for infrastructure development is launched. In this model the **government picks a few large conglomerates to implement its development priorities.**

Significance of “national champions” model for infrastructure development:

- Access to some cash-rich projects allows these national champions to borrow from external credit markets by using these entities as collateral. This **lowers the cost of finance** of the other projects. It also **frees up domestic savings** for private investment.
- National champions can **contribute to economic growth** by generating revenue, creating jobs, and investing in research and development.
- National champions can invest heavily in research and development, leading to **technological advancements** that can benefit the broader economy.
- To incentivise their investment, infrastructure firms need to be given control over existing projects with strong cash flows. It **helps them to maintain profitability.**
- The public association of the champions with the government’s national development policy generates a **competitive advantage** for the champions. It helps them in getting **domestic and foreign contracts.** This too guarantees some stable cash flow.
- The model can help ensure that the country has a **strong presence in strategically important industries**, such as defense or energy, which can be critical to national security.

Issues:

- There is direct association of these conglomerates with government policies. It creates the potential for markets and regulators to treat them as too big to fail. This opens the door to **market hysteria, and spillovers of sectoral problems into systemic shocks.**
- It **encourages** market concentration. This can often be bad for efficiency and productivity at the economy-wide level.
- These projects take a long time to generate large cash flows. The state needs to provide the champions with access to additional cash flows. The country can turn into **industrial oligarchy.**
- It can generate the perception of an **uneven playing field** in terms of market access and selective regulatory forbearance. It can become a significant deterrent for foreign investors.

Infrastructure works as a national aspiration, a barometer of national progress, a mechanism for job creation, a vehicle for crowding in private investment. The newly established **Infrastructure Finance Secretariat** is a step in the right direction.

Q.19) Discuss the need to overhaul the mechanisms to tackle rising disinformation in India.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain the need to overhaul the mechanisms to tackle rising disinformation in India.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

“Disinformation” is false information disseminated intentionally to cause serious social harm. In the age of internet and social media, it has spread unchecked. This demands a public vigilance and awareness along with modern technological solutions to enhance scrutiny of all the facts and data.

Steps taken by the government to tackle disinformation:

- **IPC Sections 153A and 295:** Under this action can be initiated against someone creating or spreading fake news if it can be termed as hate speech.
- **Defamation Suit:** IPC Section 499 makes defamation a criminal offence. Section 500 provides for punishment for criminal defamation.
- **Broadcasting Content Complaint Council (BCCC):** A complaint relating to objectionable TV content or fake news can be filed to the Broadcasting Content Complaints Council.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000: Section 69A** gives power to the Union Government to block access to any information online that it considers necessary in the **interest of the sovereignty and the integrity of India, the security of the state or public order.**
- The Union brought out the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** to regulate content by online publishers of news and social media intermediaries.
- The recent **draft amendments to the IT Rules, 2021** empower the Press Information Bureau to flag inaccurate and fake news related to government bodies on social media platforms.

Issues with government measures in tackling disinformation:

- There has been little or **no serious discussion** on the menace and the extent of disinformation in India.
- The government in India has only employed knee jerk measures such as Internet shutdowns without following the doctrine of proportionality. This response is **over simplistic, nontransparent and autocratic.**
- The government has not introduced a **robust framework** to tackle the root causes of disinformation. Rather, the Union has granted itself greater powers to strike down any content that is not pleasant for the government.
- The focus has been more on **containing criticism against the Union Government** and its leaders, instead of blocking fake news.

A more studied, comprehensive and calculated set of legislative actions is required. The objective should be to balance between free speech under Article 19 of the Constitution of India, and protecting citizens from malicious disinformation.

Q.20) Highlight the government initiatives to protect the fast-growing digital economy.

Times of India

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain some government initiatives to protect the fast-growing digital economy.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

India has executed many citizen-friendly programs over the last 75 years. However, the **Digital India Initiative** has been a turning point for India. Today around 20 platforms run on this initiative which has made Indians to adapt technology in their lives. E.g. **Bhim UPI** has recorded over 6.28 billion transactions in July 2022. The digitization is expected to offer a **\$700 billion opportunity for India by 2030**.

The following government initiatives are started to protect the digital ecosystem and combat cybercrime:

- **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS):** CCTNS has now been integrated into all 16,447 police stations in the country. In 99.9% of police stations, 100% of FIRs are registered immediately in the CCTNS.
- **CERT-In (Indian Computer Emergency Response Team):** It is the national nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents as and when they occur.
- **Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS):** to expedite justice by exchanging data across courts, police, prosecution, prisons, and forensic labs. The recent Phase II of ICJS is based on the principle of **'one data, one entry'** and would be made available through a dedicated and secure cloud-based infrastructure with high-speed connectivity.
- **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C):** Under this, seven platforms operate, such as a reporting portal, a cybercrime investigation task force etc. work in coordination with each other. So far, more than 20 lakh cybercrime complaints have been registered on the portal. Fifteen crore people have used this portal. A massive open online courses' platform (MOOCs) called the 'CyTrain' portal has been developed under I4C.
- **Fingerprint data system 'NAFIS':** It has been launched with a storage capacity of 300 crore fingerprint data along with a '1930' helpline. More than 250 banks and financial intermediaries are onboarded on this platform, which helps in real-time actions like blocking and lien marking of defrauded money.
- **Safe City project:** It aims to create a safe, secure, and empowering environment for women in public places and has been introduced in eight selected cities.
- Grant-in-aid of about Rs 100 crore has been provided to states/UTs to set up **forensic-training laboratories** for the cyberworld.

India's digital vision talks about data sovereignty and giving domestic firms an advantage. With the right policy incentives, local firms could capture large shares of the digital payments market to become e-commerce players on a global scale.

Q.21) Universal Health Care must encompass primary, secondary, and tertiary care for all who need it, and at affordable cost without discrimination. Examine the statement.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain some steps which are required to provide UHC. Also write some issues.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The concept of universal health coverage (UHC) was first proposed by the **Bhore Committee in 1946**. UHC entails ensuring all people have access to quality health services- including prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliation – without incurring financial hardship. The concept covers three key elements — access, quality, and financial protection. India is committed to achieving **Universal Health care for all by 2030**, which is fundamental to achieving the other Sustainable Development Goals.

What steps are required to provide UHC?

- **Health Services:** Prioritise health services which are of most significance to reducing mortality and morbidity. There is need to **invest in pre-service medical and paramedical education** and also engage in multi-sectoral partnerships to address determinants of health.
- **Finance:** Increase domestic resource mobilisation and budget re-allocation at frequent intervals. Focus should be on **efficient and judicious time-bound utilisation** of financial resources.
- **Equity:** safety net approaches including vouchers and conditional cash-transfers should be expanded and also expand service delivery for **marginalised and vulnerable groups**.
- **Preparedness:** State level and international collaborations should be enhanced to prepare for and respond to public health emergencies such as **epidemics/pandemics**.
- **Governance:** Ensure that all citizens have access to data and information on UHC. For this strengthen national institutions and organisations through capacity building and use effective mechanisms for inter-sectoral dialogue and work.
- India needs to own its **digital health strategy** that works and leads towards UHC and person-centered care. E.g. Online consultation through video conferencing

Issues:

- There are not enough government-run institutions for the poor who cannot afford exploitative and expensive private care. There is a need for public healthcare centers to **prevent wasteful expenditure**.
- Another challenge is **regulating private health-care providers**. As they have a conflict between the profit motive and the well-being of the patient.
- The National Health Service model needs to have not only **good management and adequate resources** but also sound work culture and professional ethics. India's public health services do not have a good record on this part.
- It fails to assure accessibility or affordability as its financing is conditional to insurance premiums paid either by the individual or state.

Every individual has a right to be healed and not have complications, disability, and death. That right is guaranteed by the new global approach to UHC, where nobody is left uncounted and uncared for. For achieving the targets of Universal Health Coverage, the Government of India has implemented a flagship public health scheme – **'Ayushman Bharat'**.

Q.22) Rising import restrictions may put FTAs and global value chain integration at risk; external imbalances can be addressed with other foreign trade policy tools.

Discuss.

Live mint

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain some Issues with rising import restrictions. Also write some measures to address these issues.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The government has been working on reducing imports for several years and has raised tariffs along with other barriers. The government is also working on strategies to **contain “non-essential imports”**. Imports were denied if they were deemed “inessential”. They were also denied if they were accepted as essential but were indigenously available.

Issues with rising import restrictions:

- If imports can be restricted by non-tariff means, our negotiating partners would worry that the **benefit of tariff concessions could be negated by resorting to import curbs**. That is why the WTO prohibits quantitative import restrictions, except in circumstances of a balance-of-payments crisis.
- Protectionism does not benefit the domestic economy. It rather **encourages inefficiency of domestic manufacturers**.
- Our credibility in wanting to integrate with global value chains also requires assurances that imports will not arbitrarily be restricted. It might be possible that major manufacturers become **reluctant to locate investments in India** for global supply if there is a danger of arbitrary restrictions on imports.
- Import restrictions are sometimes urged because of our large trade deficit. This **ignores our large surplus on the ‘invisibles’ account**, reflecting booming service exports and also remittances.

What can be done?

- To address the issue of large trade deficit, our foreign trade policy should ideally **declare categorically that quantitative import restrictions will not be used to reduce access to imports**. **Transparency of intent in policy** is critical for building trust, and trust is essential to attract investors.
- Some restrictions are necessary for safety reasons- for example, on toys with harmful paints. We should **upgrade our safety standards**, and these should apply to all items, including the locally made.
- **Foreign exchange reserves** can take care of sudden temporary pressures.
- The **policy of a floating but managed exchange rate** gives the Reserve Bank of India all the flexibility it needs to allow the exchange rate to adjust in a way that will help contain imports and simultaneously stimulate exports.
- If problem reflects an excess of aggregate demand over supply, which is spilling into balance of payments, the solution lies in **tightening fiscal and monetary policy**.

India wants to integrate with global value chains and take advantage of the ‘**China plus one**’ approach being adopted by many multinationals. However, such arbitrary import restrictions won’t encourage foreign manufacturers to invest in India.

Q.23) IPCC report points to the higher risk India's indigenous groups face & the value of local knowledge. Elaborate on the statement.

ToI

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain findings of IPCC report on India.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its final report of the sixth assessment cycle, titled “**AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023**”. According to the report, India is among the countries that face the highest risk from climate change's impact, ranging from heat waves to cyclones and urban and rural displacement. The report also echoes the **Prime Minister's vision for “LiFE”** or Lifestyle for Environment.

Findings of IPCC report on India:

- India has **large informal sectors and outdoor workers** in various economic activities. It is important to note the evidence of observed extremes of heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts and tropical cyclones, and the chances of extreme compound events in terms of intensity and frequency.
- The historical **burden of inequity** in India's process of development has been on the poor and marginalised, with some policies partly addressing these issues, in the past 70 years. The report calls for **renewed attention and new policy design** given the additional vulnerabilities of climate change, yet protecting the rights of the poor and marginalized communities.
- The report highlights the importance of prioritising fairness, climate justice, **inclusivity**, respect for divergent worldviews, and **sharing knowledge** for transformative change. Prioritising these **shared values and inclusivity** is crucial to achieving sustainable climate action.
- In India, **public consultation process** in development projects needs to be revisited to include those changes that successfully shift development to sustainable models.
- India is the hotbed of global climate investment, but it needs to **distribute equally** to adaptation, along with mitigation efforts in the clean energy space.
- India has policies for insurance, social protection and safety nets that can reduce vulnerability and exposure. However, **innovation and adoption of low-emission technologies** lag due to limited finance and technology transfer.

India must act urgently on ways to **decarbonise the energy supply sector** and reduce the burden on it. The sector must meet the ever-increasing demand by managing wasteful energy-use through regulatory, market-based, and non-market-based policies and redistributive policy packages and retraining of people.

Q.24) Extreme heat as climate change worsens could adversely impact our economic output unless we adopt mitigative measures. Discuss

Live Mint

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain how extreme heat could worsen economic output. Also write some mitigative measures.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

According to World Meteorological Organisation, the average annual temperatures have already gone above 1.2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial times. According to IMD, some parts of India are experiencing temperatures that are exceptional for mid-March and are **at**

least 9 degrees above average. Experts are concerned about the exceptionally high temperatures.

How extreme heat could worsen economic output?

- **Reduced agricultural productivity:** Crops thrive within a narrow range of temperatures. While a small temperature increase can lead to a sharp drop in yields for grains like wheat, chickpeas, and mustard seeds. Last year's (2022) heat brought wheat production down by roughly 10 percent or almost 11 million metric tons.
- Employees are **less productive** during hot weather, even if they work inside, while children struggle to learn in extreme heat, resulting in lower lifetime earnings which in turn hurt future economic growth.
- Rising temperatures can hurt **labour productivity**. This includes outdoor sectors like construction sites and street vendors and indoor sectors such as cloth weaving, garment sewing and steel infrastructural products. This is because workers will **work less and absenteeism** will increase.
- Economists estimate that **worker productivity declines** by 2-4% with every degree Celsius increase in the temperature above normal levels,
- **Denial of sleep** at the night also hurts the ability to work the next day.

Mitigative measures:

- **Change in forecast model:** The forecasting model used by the Reserve Bank of India, the Quarterly Forecasting Model can be used in predicting heat waves also.
- **Innovative model:** A collaborative effort by the government, private sector and voluntary organizations must invest in new building materials for homes as well as factories. Private investments in new roofing solutions to cool down homes in urban slums should be encouraged.
- **Urban greening:** where more trees and other vegetation can help to cool down cities and towns.
- Climate smart agricultural practices like aerobic cultivation, cover-crop method, micro-irrigation, rainwater harvesting should be promoted.
- **Adaptive technologies and practices** including resilient agro-pastoral practices, water management and rehabilitation of ecosystems should be promoted.
- Fast-tracking the **switch to clean energy sources** is vital to dealing with the issue of the heat wave.

The solution to climate change lies in understanding the impact of climate change in our life and taking steps to achieve climate resilience. Urban greening can help to cool down cities and towns.

Q.25) Do you think that the old pension scheme is a regressive redistribution mechanism that favours a better-off class? Give reasons in favour of your arguments.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain how old pension scheme is a regressive redistribution mechanism. Also write arguments against this.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The Old Pension Scheme (OPS) offers **inflation- and pay commission-indexed pension payments** to retired government employees and their spouses (after the employees' death) without any contribution from the employees. Under Old Pension Scheme, employees are not required to contribute to their pensions and pension was guaranteed.

Old pension scheme: a regressive redistribution mechanism:

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- The **World Inequality Report 2022** estimated the average monthly income of the bottom 50% of the population to be ₹4,468, whereas it is ₹14,669.7 for the middle 40%. The salary of a government employee is higher than the income of **more than 90% of the population**.
- From 2004 to 2019, the pension expenditure of States registered an average annual growth of 16%. OPS **compels governments to compress an already low social sector expenditure**, pushing the marginalized into a downward spiral of indigence.
- Many State governments have yet to implement the **Seventh pay norms**, whereas some States have reportedly not paid arrears of the Sixth pay. Governments at the State level do not have **fiscal autonomy**.
- Currently, the **bottom 50% of the population** bears the burden of indirect taxation **six times more** than their income. It will push them into destitution and abject **poverty**.
- OPS will create **expenditure challenges for providing public goods**. It will deprive a large population of basic necessities.

Not the case:

- **Short-term gains by Government:** They save money since they will not have to put the 10 per cent matching contribution towards employee pension funds.
- It will result in higher take-home salaries, since they too will not set aside 10 percent of their basic pay and dearness allowance towards pension funds.
- The pension drawn in New Pension Scheme (NPS) is lower than the OPS.
- NPS is dependent on the market prices of equity/bonds in which the amount is invested. Therefore, a crash in the markets can affect the pensioners.
- OPS is a fixed government expenditure irrespective of an economic slowdown or a stock market crash. This makes it **useful in counter-cyclical policy measure** during a crisis. The pension scheme needs to be reformulated in a way that it provides benefits to employees without putting an onerous burden on the employers. A **participatory pension** for government employees will provide a more **egalitarian outcome**.

Q.26) Highlight the importance of the High Seas Treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of resources in the open oceans.

Indian Express

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain the importance of the High Seas Treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of resources in the open oceans.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

The High Seas Treaty is being referred to as the '**Paris Agreement for the Ocean**'. It is being negotiated **under the UNCLOS**. It is expected that the treaty will also help mitigate the impact of climate change on oceans. At present, only 1.2% of international waters fall under protected areas. The high seas account for **more than 60% of the world's ocean area** and cover about half of the Earth's surface, which makes them a hub of marine life.

Importance of the High Seas Treaty:

- The high seas are home to around 2.7 lakh known species, many of which are yet to be discovered.

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- They regulate the climate by playing a **fundamental role in planetary stability** by mitigating the effects of climate change through its absorption of carbon and by storing solar radiation and distributing heat around the globe.
- Activities will be highly **regulated, and conservation efforts** similar to what happens in forest or wildlife zones, will be undertaken.
- Oceans host very diverse life forms, many of which can be useful for human beings in **areas like drug development**. Genetic information from these organisms is already being extracted, and their benefits are being investigated.
- The treaty seeks to ensure that any benefits arising out of such efforts, including monetary gains, are **free from strong intellectual property rights controls**, and are **equitably shared** amongst all.
- Under the provisions of the new treaty, commercial or other activities that can have significant impact on the marine ecosystem, or can cause large-scale pollution in the oceans, would require an **environmental impact assessment** to be done, and the results of this exercise have to be shared with the international community.

Just like atmospheric warming; the window to take actions to protect marine ecosystems, before irreversible catastrophic damages happen, will be limited. The countries must act with urgency to reach consensus to protect marine ecosystems in the earnest. A binding High Seas Treaty is necessary in this regard.

Q.27) Why is the government encouraging semiconductor manufacturing in India?

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain why the government is encouraging semiconductor manufacturing in India.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

Semiconductors are the building blocks of almost every modern electronic device from smartphones to connected devices in the Internet of Things. The Union Government has disbursed around ₹1,645 crore in **performance-linked incentives (PLI) for electronics manufacturers** so far. The Semiconductor Industry is facing an acute crisis with a **global semiconductor shortage**. Hence, the shortage is expected to have a major impact on global manufacturing industry and consequently the economy.

The government is encouraging semiconductor manufacturing in India due to following reasons:

- These chips are **found in practically every modern electrical appliance** and personal electronics devices. More and more nations are trying to turn **away from China's dominance** in the space, following geopolitical pressures to de-leverage themselves from supply chain vulnerabilities.
- Semiconductor companies have been gearing up to ramp up capacity for manufacturing advanced chips **required by 5G Technology**.
- Also, India imports almost all semiconductors to meet its demand, which is estimated to reach around \$100 billion by 2025 from about \$24 billion now. It will **cut the import bill too**.
- Further, these chips are made with embedded instructions, which may contain **malware or backdoors** and are impossible to diagnose. And as Semiconductor chips are used in various strategic areas like, defence and telecom, the domestic manufacturing of chips assumes **strategic importance** and would **provide a measure of security**.

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- Setting up domestic manufacturing units would help **to insulate India against future supply disruptions**. Moreover, any **intellectual property** that is generated will be a big bonus.
- This move will also **make the Indian manufacturers globally competitive** to attract investment in the areas of core competency and cutting-edge technology.
- Additionally, economies with a large production of Semiconductor chips, like US, Japan, Korea, China and Singapore, have benefited the most in terms of **enhancing their GDP** and establishing a **strong foothold on the global economy**.

Chip production is a resource-intensive and expensive process. Initial funding should focus on areas like design and R&D. Like-minded nations should specialize in different aspects of the semiconductor and electronics manufacturing process.

Q.28) Highlight the challenges posed by the stray dog crisis in India. Also, suggest some measures to tackle this crisis.

The Hindu

Introduction: Contextual introduction.

Body: Explain the challenges posed by the stray dog crisis in India. Also, suggest some measures to tackle this crisis.

Conclusion: Write a way forward.

Stray dogs are protected under the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960** and Rules enacted under Section 38 of the Act, particularly the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001. That makes it illegal for an individual, RWA, or estate management to remove or relocate dogs. Only 15% of all stray dogs vaccinated. India's stray population is huge, adoption is terribly slow and limited as many people only want foreign breed dogs.

Challenges posed by the stray dog crisis:

- At almost 21,000, India also accounts for more than a third of all **rabies-related deaths**.
- From the last five years, more than 300 people — mostly children from poor and rural families — have been **killed by dogs**.
- A 2017 study showed that homeless dogs in rural areas can also be **devastating for wildlife**. Over 80 species, of which more than 30 are on the endangered list, were targeted by dogs in wilderness areas.
- Dogs that are out by themselves could **cause accidents** when it runs on the road, which may also lead to injuries to them and other people.
- Stray dogs enjoy opening garbage bags and they can lead to the garbage and refuse being scattered all around the environment and street. Stray dogs will scavenge for food and can break open garbage cans and disturb gardens.

Measures to tackle this crisis:

- **Recommendation of court:** People who feed stray dogs could be made responsible for vaccinating them and bearing costs if somebody is attacked by the animal.
- Every **Resident Welfare Association (RWA)** should **form "Guard and Dog partnerships"** in consultation with the Police Dog Squad. So that dogs can be trained and yet be friendly to residents of a colony.
- The municipal corporation, the resident welfare association, and local dog groups should **vaccinate and sterilize** the animals.
- Sick animals, aggressive animals, would have to be **euthanized**. A segment of the population can be **sheltered**.
- The only long-term solution is to implement **strict pet ownership laws**, prohibit people from carelessly feeding dogs everywhere, and set up facilities to house dogs.

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- There is a desperate need for **more staff and funds**. Besides sterilisation, efforts must also be focused on **adoption**. And we must find some compassion to help resolve this crisis humanely.

As long as dogs are homeless on the streets, the idea of a rabies-free India, with harmonious co-existence between people and dogs, will be a utopian dream. Keeping dogs homeless is bad for dogs, bad for people, and bad for wildlife.

Q.29) 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.30) 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 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.31) 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:

- **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.32) 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.
- 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.33) 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 (Aadhaar), 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.
- 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.34) 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.
- 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.35) 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

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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.36) 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**.

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- 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 **merchanted 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**.