



**9 PM**

# **Compilation**

**April, 2023**

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April 2023

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# General Studies Paper – 1

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General Studies - 1

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1. [Same-sex marriages: A matter for Parliament](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Same-sex marriages: A matter for Parliament**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **3rd April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS1- Salient features of society

**Relevance**– Issues related to same sex marriages

**News**– The Supreme Court, in *Supriyo v. Union of India*, has referred the matter relating to legalisation of same-sex marriages to a Constitution Bench.

**What is the position of the centre on same-sex marriage?**

As per the arguments of center, the same -sex marriage is **not recognised by** Indian traditions, ethos, culture and the **societal conception** of the institution of marriage. Marriage is a **holy union** between a biological male and a biological female to form **to conceive Children**.

If same-sex marriages should be legalised, Parliament is the **right institution to debate and decide** and not the Court.

**What are the arguments in support of court intervention in the issue?**

It is the duty of the Court to address the **violations of fundamental rights**, which are arising due to non -recognition of same-sex marriages.

The question of same-sex marriages involves **conflict between** the **rights of a society** to conserve traditions and the **right of an individual** to enjoy his constitutional freedoms.

**What are the arguments in support of the center’s position on this matter?**

Marriage is predominantly a social institution. Therefore, it should be the domain of the government to legislate. This point is supported by the following 4 arguments:

**First**, the question of same-sex marriage has the potential to change the **concept of a family** which is the **building block of society**. Most of the conventional definitions of marriage adhere to the Centre’s conceptualization of the institution.

While same-sex marriages are not a threat to this understanding, they demand a **nuanced alteration** of it.

**Second**, the **current legislative framework** promotes the **conventional understanding** of marriage. Marriages in India are governed by the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936; the Christian Marriage and Divorce Act, 1957; and Muslim Personal Laws**. All marriage laws recognize marriages between a man and a woman. Although the Special Marriage Act (SMA) of 1954, uses gender-neutral language, it cannot be presumed to favour same-sex marriage.

**Third, religious and societal morality** still conceptualises intercourse as a **procreative activity**. Various laws pertaining to marriage requires the **consummation of marriage for its validation**. Consummation for purposes other than procreation is not considered a **moral thing**.

In the **legal concept of marriage, procreation** is a basic requirement. **Section 12 of the Hindu Marriage Act** provides that where a marriage has not been consummated owing to the impotence of one of the parties, the said marriage is voidable.

**Fourth**, center’s concerns regarding alteration of family unit are not as regressive as they looks. It is in line with the broader social acceptability. For example, Live-in relationships are judicially recognised, but they are not equated to marriage under the law. The social acceptability of such relationships remains debated.



### What is the way forward for same sex marriages in India?

The issue of legal recognition of same-sex unions requires a **broader debate** in society and the legislature.

The **rights issues** related to same sex marriages are **substantial** and must be addressed immediately. The push to formalise the institution of same-sex unions must come from representative bodies such as Parliament.

### 2. [Make In India. Indians Need It](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Make In India. Indians Need It”** published in **The Times of India** on **5<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Demographic Dividend

**Relevance:** measures needed to utilize India’s demographic dividend

**News:** The UN has projected that India would overtake China as the most populous country during April. This has led to debate over the benefits of high demographic dividend.

#### How can India utilize its demographic dividend?

India’s fertility rate has declined to replacement level last year. It has a median age of 28 years, significantly lower than 38 in the United States and 39 in China.

Hence, **India can have the largest workforce in the world for at least the next 25 years**. However, India can only materialize if it **is able to generate jobs for the millions of youths**.

According to **the McKinsey Global Institute 2020 report**, India needs to create at least 90 million new non-farm jobs to accommodate fresh entrants into the labor force by 2030.

**Must Read:** [Reaping India’s demographic dividend](#)

#### What is the present situation of unemployment in India?

**According to the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy**, the unemployment rate in March was 7.8%.

This is an underestimate **because of the huge ‘disguised unemployment’**. People who are involved in agriculture and other informal sectors on low wages are also counted as fully employed.

Further, **the female labour force participation rate in India is not only low compared to other South Asian economies but is declining**.

Moreover, it has become common in India for post graduates to apply for low-level government jobs. This highlights the quality of education and the problem of employment in India.

#### How can jobs be created and what are the challenges?

There is a misconception that the software industry as a service provider has been a big job creator. In reality, **the large majority of jobs created in the services sector have been the low wage, low productivity type in the informal sector**.

Further, there are views that India should focus on the services sector because the demand for services will grow as aging populations in rich countries will consume more services than goods. However, **along with skilling its labour force, India needs to focus on the growth of its manufacturing industry**. It has the potential to meet the job challenge and create millions of jobs for youths.

In this regard, **the government’s ‘Make in India’ campaign is the hope and expectation that India can replicate the China model of export to the rich world**.

However, the development of robotics and machine learning are taking away jobs in the manufacturing sector and India is also looking for friend-shoring and reshoring of production.

**Must Read:** [At the centre of job creation](#)

### What lies ahead?

India imports goods worth over \$100 billion annually from China. If even half of this can be made at home by productivity improvement, it will mean millions of jobs.

Therefore, India should look forward to expand its manufacturing sector to reap the benefits of demographic dividend.

### 3. [Each of Earth's tectonic plates has its own history](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Each of Earth's tectonic plates has its own history**” published in **The Times of India** on **8<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Geography

**Relevance:** geographical features of the Earth.

**News:** The article discusses various geographical feature of the Earth.

#### What is a mantle?

It is the layer **between the crust and the core** at Earth's centre. The mantle is **solid rock and composes the majority of the volume of our planet**. This rock is slowly convecting, like a boiling pot of water.

**Motions of the rock over very long periods of time are closely tied to the movement of tectonic plates on Earth's surface.** Such plate motions then give us earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

#### What are the effects of tectonic plate movements?

Tectonic plate system with plates moving all over, collide, rip apart and modify lithosphere.

**The Himalayan Mountain range was caused by the collision of the Indian plate with Eurasia.** The force which built up this range caused the lithosphere and crust to thicken. **Currently, India is moving north at a rate of 3.5 cm each year.**

#### What are the effects of gravity?

Gravity acts on plates and can **cause mountain ranges over tens of millions of years to very slowly collapse**. Gravity operates deep beneath Earth to remove elements of the lithosphere.

In certain locations, small pieces that are cold and thick in comparison to the mantle drop off the bottom due to gravity. **This is a process of modifying the lithosphere.**

#### What is a subduction zone?

Under this, **the oceanic part of the tectonic plates gets recycled back into the mantle.**

The oceanic crust gets formed at mid-ocean ridges and destroyed and recycled at a subduction zone, where one oceanic plate sinks into the mantle. **The driving force is gravity.**

This is a way Earth recycles material from its surface to its interior and vice versa.

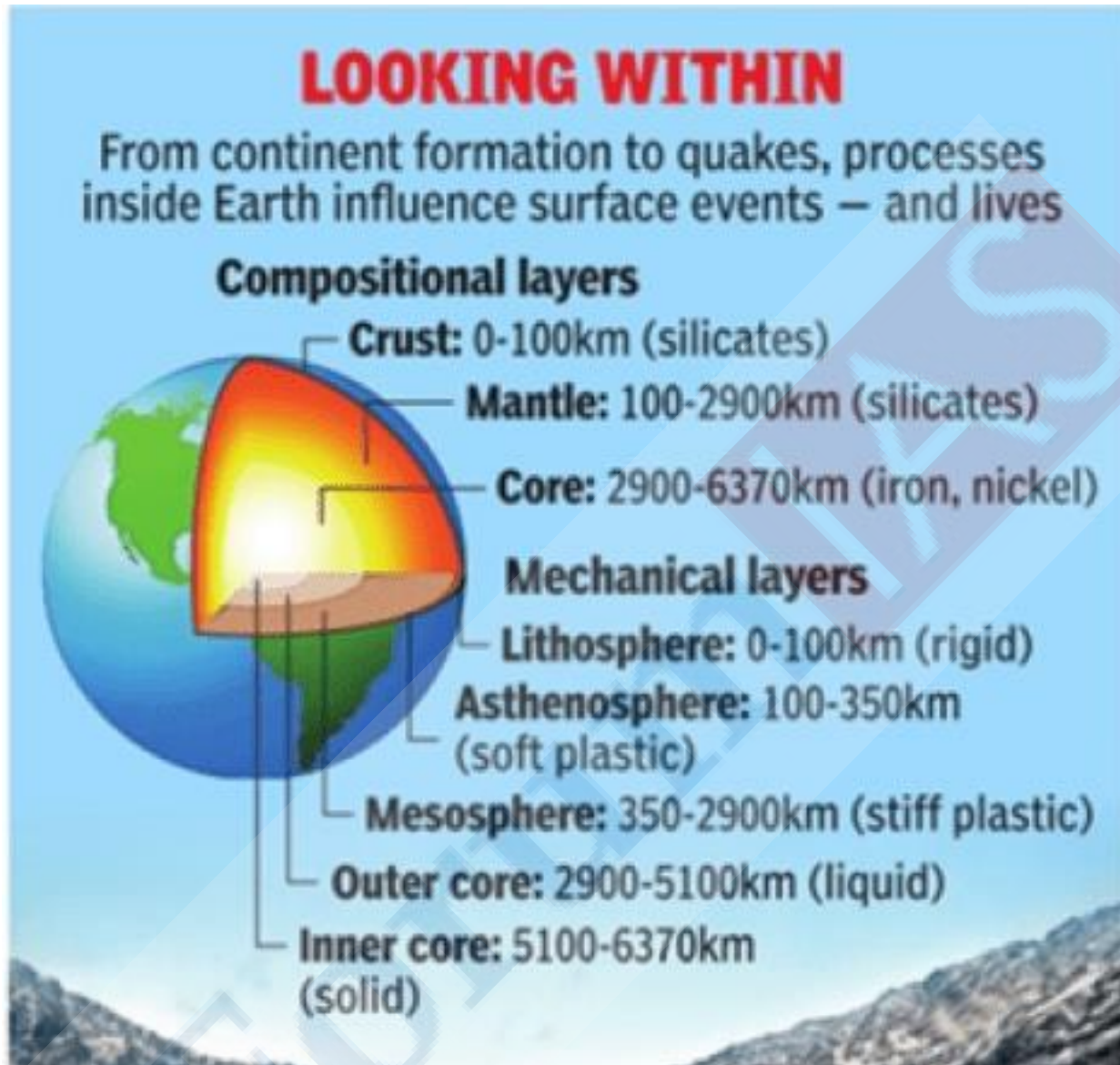
**A lot of Earth's carbon cycle is controlled by subduction.** Carbon also gets locked into limestone rocks which are absorbed back into Earth's interior. **Subduction zones are the prime sites for geologic hazards like earthquakes and tsunamis.**

#### Which part of India is more vulnerable to earthquakes?

Many regions become prone to earthquakes because of tectonic plates. The **northern part of India and its surrounding countries are more vulnerable** as they are **located on a major plate boundary where quakes occur.**

People in such zones should be prepared with sustainable building, resilient infrastructure and keeping emergency communications and aid measures ready and handy to minimize damage.

**Must Read:** [Lessons from Turkey: How to make India earthquake prepared](#)



Source: The Times of India

#### 4. [Indian philosophy can guide the world in these troubled times](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Indian philosophy can guide the world in these troubled times**” published in the “The Indian Express” on **13th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS1- Indian culture

**Relevance-** Indian philosophy

**News-** Indian civilization, unlike its Persian or Roman counterparts, survived waves of invasions. Its philosophy has empowered it to withstand not just several attacks by foreign aggressors.

**Why has India earned goodwill in global thinking circles?**

India’s outlook towards human life and **philosophical approach** towards **worldly concerns**.

India is not the only civilizational nation in the world. But the **philosophical underpinnings** of the idea of India are almost unique.

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Indian movies, dance and music, and historical monuments continue to be an attraction for the global community. These cultural aspects, from yoga and spirituality to traditional knowledge systems such as ayurveda, are **manifestations of Indian philosophy**.

**What are five fundamental tenets of India philosophy that make India stand out?**

**First** is the spiritual democracy of India. This country was never a theocratic state. Its approach has been **ekam sat, vipra bahuda vadant**. It rejects any **monopolistic approach** to ways of worship.

**The second** tenet is based on the first tenet. The country has **unity inherent in its diversity**. It has enabled it to **accommodate and celebrate the pervasive diversity**.

**The third** important tenet is our approach of **confluence with mother nature**. This approach is not in favour of **conquering nature**. It is **gratitude towards nature**. India has a well-established tradition of **saluting mother nature** practically at the start of every day.

**Sustainability** has now become the **focal point of development policy** at a global level. However, it has been a part of India's philosophy of human life. **Many traditions** and rituals reflect this approach.

**The fourth** tenet is the **concept of antyodaya**. It puts the last man first. It is about considering the most deprived for distribution of the fruits of development. Antyodaya encompasses both social and economic justice.

Design of many welfare schemes and policies under Prime Minister Modi, effectively reflect the principles of antyodaya.

**The fifth** tenet is **vasudhaiva kutumbakam**. India has imagined the **entire world as one family**, where **values like mutuality, sharing and collectivism** are given primacy.

These five tenets emerge from **scriptures and the teachings of sages and philosophers** including **Gautama Buddha, Adi Shankara and Guru Nanak**.

### 5. [Babasaheb's warning: In politics, bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to dictatorship](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Babasaheb's warning: In politics, bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to dictatorship**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on **14th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS1- Modern Indian history and personalities

**Relevance**– Ideas and life of Ambedkar

**News**– India is celebrating the 132th birth anniversary of Ambedkar.

**What are the contributions of Ambedkar for the country?**

As per Rajendra Prasad, Ambedkar worked with **zeal and devotion** as the members of the Drafting Committee and its Chairman in spite of his indifferent health. He has justified his selection as chairman of the drafting committee.

In the Constituent Assembly debates, Ambedkar's **intellectual capabilities** were visible. He constantly articulated in **favour of the rights of the citizens** and emphasised remedies to enforce them.

The debates also reflect **prophetic wisdom**. He continuously spoke about the problems that existed and may confront the nation in the future.

He was concerned about the **unity of the nation**. If Hindu-Muslim problem is solved by force, this country would be involved in perpetually conquering Muslims.

**What are Ambedkar ideas about democracy in India?**

We have prepared a **democratic Constitution**. But the successful working of democratic institutions requires the people working there to have willingness to **respect the viewpoints of others, capacity for compromise and accommodation**.

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A good constitution may turn out bad because those working upon it are bad.

He feared that India **may lose democracy**. As per him, it is quite possible for this new-born democracy to retain its form but give way to dictatorship.

### **How can democracy be maintained in India as per Ambedkar?**

There is a need to adopt constitutional **methods** of achieving our **social and economic objectives**. It means we must abandon the bloody **methods of revolution**. There is a need to abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation, and satyagraha.

The people should not **lay their liberties** at the feet of even a great man. They should not be given powers that can enable them to **subvert their institutions**. There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men. But there are limits to gratefulness.

He warned against **Bhakti or hero-worship** in India. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the **salvation of the soul**. But in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure **road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship**.

We must not be content with mere **political democracy**. We must make our **political democracy a social democracy** as well. Political democracy cannot last unless it is without the base of social democracy.

### **What are Ambedkar's views on social democracy?**

Social democracy meant a way of life which recognises **liberty, equality, and fraternity as the principles of life**. They **formed a trinity** and could not be separated from each other.

In economic and social life, we continue to deny **"the principle of one man one value"**. We continue to deny **equality in our social and economic life** for a very long time. If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our **political democracy in peril**.

### **What are Ambedkar views on fraternity?**

For him, fraternity was of great importance. It means a **sense of common brotherhood** of all Indians. This is the principle that gives **unity and solidarity to social life**.

He felt it was difficult to achieve fraternity in India, because there are castes. The castes are **anti-national**. **They are anti-national also because they generate** jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste.

## 6. [In B R Ambedkar's vision, a model for governance today](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **"In B R Ambedkar's vision, a model for governance today"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **15th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS1- Personalities associated with modern Indian history

**Relevance**– Ambedkar ideas and life

**News**– India is celebrating the 132th birth anniversary of Ambedkar.

### **What are the contributions of Ambedkar?**

In every assignment, from his association with the Simon Commission, three Round Table conferences, as labour member in the Viceroy's Council and as chairman of the Constitution's drafting committee, he firmly **safeguarded the interests of the people**.

He stressed **establishing institutions for a just society**.

### **What are the steps taken by the current government to preserve the legacy of Ambedkar?**

Under the Ministry of Culture, the **National Research for Conservation of Cultural Property, Lucknow**, has preserved Babasaheb's belongings for posterity.

A total of 1,358 objects, including the typewriter used to draft the Constitution, have been preserved and will be showcased at the upcoming Dr B R Ambedkar Socio-Economic & Culture Centre, Chicholi Nagpur.

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This centre will emerge as a **sacred place**, highlighting glimpses of his contribution to building the nation.

### How actions of the Modi government indicate the acceptance of Ambedkar ideas?

From the **planning to the implementation level**, the governance system follows **Ambedkar's vision**.

Government's efforts has led to dedicated development of the **Panch Tirtha, Dr Ambedkar International Centre**, and the implementation of **pro-poor and people-centric policy measures** to facilitate the ease of life of citizens.

These are steps that bring the government closer to **Ambedkar's ideas**. Stand-Up India, Start-Up India, PM Awas Scheme, BHIM, Mudra, and JAM trinity are some of the examples.

The **Prime Minister's Panch Pran mantra** wants to make a developed India by taking **pride in our roots, removing traces of the colonial mindset**. It is also **reflected in Ambedkar's ideas**. Ambedkar believed that the **constitutional ideals and social philosophy of "liberty, equality and fraternity"** have **Indian cultural roots**, from the teachings of the Buddha. They are not merely a **legacy of the French Revolution**.

### 7. [The story of khayal shows how attempts to remove the imprint of Muslim rule will impoverish Indian culture](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"The story of khayal shows how attempts to remove the imprint of Muslim rule will impoverish Indian culture"** published in **The Indian Express** on **17<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 1 – Art and Culture**

**Relevance:** **About khayal style of music**

**News:** NCERT has recently deleted chapters on the Mughal Empire from its Standard 12 history textbooks. However, deleting chapters will not delete the association of Mughal Empire from the Indian culture.

The Mughal Empire had association with India in varied forms such as tangible heritage, monuments, culture, clothes, food, language and music. One of the famous music from the Mughal era that still exists is khayal.

### How did khayal music develop with time?

The early form of khayal emerged in the **late 16th century when Sufi musicians based in the region between Delhi and Jaunpur adapted the *cutkula* form**. This form used a Hindi dialect. There were also devotional forms such as the **Persian *qaul* and *tarana*** sung in Sufi communities from Amir Khusro's (1253-1325) tradition.

The ***cutkula* was a regional form of khayal** used during the reign of Sultan Hussain Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur, who ruled from 1458 to 1505 and was a great music lover.

The earliest version of khayal evolved **into today's *drut bandish***. It is the fast composition, also called the ***chhota khayal***, which is meant to be sung in a spritely tempo.

The members who played this style had close relationships with **Vaishnava sects**.

Later, **Niyamat Khan Sadarang** (1670-1748), a famous dhrupad singer played a key role in developing khayal.

He began creating khayal compositions with some melodic movements from dhrupad, setting many of these compositions in a slow tempo. **His both slow and fast compositions are widely sung to this day**.

By the end of the 19th century, hereditary khayal musicians, who were largely Muslim started to teach the genre to people outside their respective families, including Hindus.

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This eventually gave rise to celebrated Hindu musicians such as Bhimsen Joshi, Kishori Amonkar, Kumar Gandharva, etc.

Today, **khayal is sung by both Hindu and Muslim groups** and deleting chapters on Mughal from the textbook will not delete rooted culture from the society.

**Must Read:** [Changes to the NCERT syllabus and associated issues – Explained](#)

### 8. [India as most populous can be more boon than bane](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “India as most populous can be more boon than bane” published in “The Hindu” on 24th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS1- Population and associated issues

**Relevance-** Issue related to population growth, size and composition

**News-** India is projected to be the most populous country by mid-2023 by superseding China. United Nation reports suggest that India will have a population of 142.86 crore by mid-2023. It is 2.9 million higher than China’s population of 142.57 crore.

**What is the right perspective to look at the population of any country?**

Population in itself is not a burden. The nature of **population growth, size and its composition** decide when a population becomes a “**resource**” or a “**burden**”. Population is a resource as long as the **country’s carrying capacity** is intact.

**Carrying capacity** is not just per capita availability of natural resources. It is a **dynamic concept** which changes according to **changing technology, the efficiency of production and consumption systems** of a country.

There is a need to look at the **age composition** of the population. It tells us about available **support ratios** in the form of the number of the working age population (15-64 years) against the dependent population.

**What are the key mechanisms to translate a demographic bonus into economic dividend?**

**Employment or job creation** is an important mechanism to translate demographic bonus to economic dividend.

**Education, skills generation and healthy lifespan** are important to translate demographic opportunity into economic gains. A skilled and healthy workforce is critical not only for **better productivity** of an economy. It also reduces **excessive public spending** and helps in **greater capital creation**.

**Good governance** is another important aspect for **reaping demographic dividends**. It helps in creating a **healthy environment** for **increasing efficiency and productivity** of the population.

**What are the trends of population growth, size and composition?**

India had a **total fertility rate of 2.0 in 2023**. It is already at **replacement level fertility**. The population is on a **path toward stabilization**.

It is in **decelerated mode** until 2064, when it will become negative growth. The peak of India’s population size will be around **169.6 crore in 2063**.

There are greater prospects for **demographic dividend than a disaster** in India. It has 68% of the working age population in 2023. The country continues to have a **demographic window of opportunity** for the next 35 years to reap an **economic dividend**.

**How is demographic dividend helpful for India?**

A relatively younger population of India provides **higher support ratios**. There is **lesser disease, disability and caring burden**.

India’s opportunity must be looked at in comparison to the **population decline and ageing** across some countries that include Japan, China, the United States and other major economies. Most of them have been implementing policies to **improve birth rates**. However, these actions are largely ineffective.

India has the potential to become a **worldwide market for both production and consumption**, with lower manufacturing costs due to a relatively cheaper workforce.

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Available demographic opportunity has the potential to boost per capita GDP by an additional 43% by 2061.

A **total fertility rate of less than 1.8** may not be **economically beneficial** for India. Therefore, **drastic population control methods** can induce forced population ageing. It would result in the nation “getting old before getting rich”.

### 9. [India becoming most populous nation – is it a bane or boon?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**India becoming most populous nation – is it a bane or boon?**” published in **The Indian Express** on **28<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Population and Associated Issues

**Relevance:** measures needed to utilize rising population for growth

**News:** India has now become the world’s most populous nation by overtaking China. There have always been arguments regarding controlling population growth as high population acts a bane for the nation.

**What steps have been taken to control India’s population?**

**During the Emergency years**, an attempt was even made to force compulsory sterilization. **Vasectomy or tubectomy camps** were run in the larger interests of the nation.

**After China declared its One Child policy**, many among the Indian elite campaigned in favor of such a policy in India.

However, **the government of that time rejected the “one-child” policy** and launched “**Do Ya Teen Bas**” followed by “**Hum Do, Hamarey Do**” campaigns.

**How did population control begin in India?**

The change in the population discourse began when **both fertility and birth rates began to fall** in the socially advanced **states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu**.

This was caused **due to increasing literacy, education and health status of women**, among other factors.

Moreover, as per the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5)**, the total fertility rate (TFR) declined to 2.0 in 2019-21. This was marginally below the “replacement level fertility rate” of 2.1.

**What are the consequences of rising population?**

Rising population affects a wide range of areas such as economic policy, trade policy, internal and external migration, political demographics, demand for public services, the use of natural resources and inter-regional variations in growth.

India’s multilateral, plurilateral and bilateral trade agreements have been demanding access to overseas jobs and employment visas.

**This implies that Indians instead of becoming assets for India, are becoming assets for the economic growth of the US, Australia, Japan, etc.**

**How can the rising population become an asset for India?**

The Nobel Prize-winning economist, **Milton Friedman was invited by then Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru in 1955** to study the Indian approach to planning and offer his views.

**Friedman was not in favour of public investment in manufacturing**, but strongly advocated public investment in education.

He argued that in any economy, the major source of productive power is not machinery, equipment, buildings and other physical capital but it is the productive capacity of the human beings who compose the society.

Hence, **Friedman asked Nehru to invest in human capital** because an ill-educated, ill-equipped, socially and culturally backward people are an economic liability.

Whereas, educated, healthy, productive and capable people are a national asset.

**What measures can be adopted by the government to utilize its human capital?**

Expenditures that improve the productive capacity of human beings are usually not considered as investment in India.



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Moreover, **out-migration of students has risen sharply over the past decade** and policy makers are not worried about creating a knowledge-based economy and society. Therefore, **India needs to invest in its human capital including education** because a nation that cannot offer proper education to all will forever find population a bane rather than a boon.



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# General Studies Paper –2

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General Studies - 2

1. [Going beyond customs: On full exemption from basic customs duty for drugs, food imported for treatment of rare diseases](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Going beyond customs: On full exemption from basic customs duty for drugs, food imported for treatment of rare diseases**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **3rd April 2023**.

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

**Relevance**– Issues Related to rare diseases

**News**– Centre has announced the full exemption from basic customs duty for all drugs and food imported for treatment of rare diseases listed under the National Policy for Rare Diseases.

To avail this exemption, the individual importer must produce a certificate from specified authorities.

**Read more** – [Drugs for rare diseases get customs duty relief](#)

**What are arguments in support of the centre move to announce exemptions?**

Rare diseases are a group of diseases that **occur infrequently** in the community. So due to lack of a large number of people with disease, there is no **incentives** for pharma companies to produce life-saving medicines.

Some of these diseases do not have any **described treatment methodologies**. For existing treatments, the drugs have to be imported and costs are high. They are **inaccessible** to a large volume of patients.

The NPRD estimates that for a child weighing 10 kg, the annual cost of treatment for some rare diseases may vary from ₹10 lakh to more than ₹1 crore per year. Treatment is **lifelong** and drug dose and costs increase with age and weight. The duty exemption will lead to **substantial savings** for patients.

**What is the way forward for proper management of rare diseases?**

The sheer number of diseases is estimated between 7,000-8,000 conditions, and the number of people with some form of rare diseases in India is estimated at 100 million. It makes it a problem that cannot be ignored.

The government must ensure that its **directions are followed in full**. It must find **innovative solutions** for this category of patients.

2. [Lithium find in J&K: Chile, with most reserves, ready to share know-how](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Lithium find in J&K: Chile, with most reserves, ready to share know-how**” published in **The Indian Express** on **3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** about Chile and India bilateral relations

**News:** The article discusses the ways through which Chile can help India in exploiting its lithium resources and other areas of cooperation between the two.

**How can Chile help India in exploiting its lithium resources?**

**Chile is the country with the most lithium reserves** (48% of the world’s total lithium deposits) and it is home to the **company SQM**, which is the second largest global lithium producer.

SQM has already invested in Australia where they have a Chilean-Australian joint venture called Covalent.

Therefore, **SQM can extend technical expertise in exploiting inferred lithium** resources of 5.9 million tonnes in Salal-Haimana area of Reasi district in Jammu and Kashmir.

**Must Read:** [Lithium Reserves in India: Strategic Significance and Concerns – Explained](#)

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### What are the different areas of cooperation between India and Chile?

Currently, there is an agreement on **trade of goods** between the two nations.

The discussions were also made in 2019 by India for **procurement of lithium from Chile**. However, the initiative came to a halt due to the Covid.

Further, during the visit of the President of India to Chile in 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding (**MoU**) **between India and Chile on cooperation in geology and minerals was renewed for five years**.

Khanij Bidesh India Limited (**KABIL**) has also taken efforts last year to source **strategic minerals lithium and cobalt** from countries like Australia, Argentina and Chile.

There were also discussions going on in wide ranging areas including trade, technology, renewables, space, mining and education between the two nations.

### 3. [Shock & Awful – Poorly installed & maintained high-power cables kill thousands every year, but official apathy continues](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Shock & Awful – Poorly installed & maintained high-power cables kill thousands every year, but official apathy continues**” published in **The Times of India** on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance

**Relevance:** death caused by electrocution.

**News:** A British tourist has died in Himachal Pradesh from electrocution. The low-hanging high-voltage cable was installed by a major public sector undertaking – NHPC. Despite complaints to remove the cable, NHPC has not yet responded.

#### What are the concerns airing from the low-hanging high-voltage cables?

**High power cables are often poorly installed close to houses with improper maintenance**, especially in the urban areas.

Discoms hardly take any note of it and they are **also little accountable to the death** caused by those wires.

As per the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2021 report**, electrocution accounted for over 12,500 casualties, including 650 children aged below 14. This implies 34 people dying daily from electrocution.

These deaths are classified as accidents by NCRB. However, these deaths are the result of administrative negligence and apathy.

Further, election promises have led to unauthorized urban growth, making the problem more complex for cities.

#### What are some of the steps taken to prevent such deaths?

**Kerala high court** recently directed municipalities to remove such cables. Some towns have undertaken projects to underground electricity lines, but the speed of work has been inconsistent.

Despite these attempts, the issue is worsening due to a lack of planning for cities and towns.

### 4. [Why India should cut down on its salt intake](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Why India should cut down on its salt intake**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 4th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues related to development and management of health

**Relevance** – Issues related to non-communicable diseases

**News-** The article explains the importance of salt reduction to reduce the prevalence of non-communicable diseases in India.

### **What are some statistics related to salt consumption across the world and in India?**

An average **Indian's sodium consumption** is more than double the physiological need. It exceeds the **WHO recommended daily intake** of less than 5 g of salt for adults.

The WHO has recently published the '**Global Report on Sodium Intake Reduction**. It tells about the progress of its member states toward **reducing population sodium intake**.

Progress has been slow. Only a few countries are making considerable headway towards the objective.

The WHO devised a **sodium score**. It ranges from 1 (least implementation) to 4 (highest implementation), for each member state. It is based on factors such as the **extent of implementation** of sodium reduction and other related measures.

India has **enacted voluntary measures** to decrease sodium in food supply and promote healthier food choices. **India's score of 2** signifies the presence of at least one voluntary policy.

### **Why is it essential for India to reduce its sodium intake?**

Empirical evidence shows that **reduced sodium intake** is a **cost effective** approach to **decrease blood pressure**.

Lowering sodium intake by 1 gram per day leads to a 5 mm Hg reduction in blood pressure for individuals aged 55, and **decrease in stroke incidence**. High BP is a **critical risk factor** for cardiovascular disease.

The **economic impact** of cardiovascular disease on low- and middle-income countries is staggering. It is estimated at \$3.7 trillion between 2011 and 2025. This is equivalent to **2% of the GDP of LMICs**.

As per **World Economic Forum**, the Indian economy lost **more than \$2 trillion** between 2012 and 2030 as a consequence of cardiovascular disease.

### **How Cardiovascular disease and hypertension pose significant challenges in India?**

As per data from the **Registrar General of India, WHO, and the Global Burden of Disease Study**, cardiovascular diseases have emerged as the **primary cause of mortality and morbidity**.

Hypertension has been identified as the **leading risk factor** for such diseases in India.

Data from the **NFHS-5** reveals that hypertension is more prevalent among men aged 15 and above compared to women.

Hypertension is more common in southern States, particularly Kerala. Punjab and Uttarakhand in the north also report high incidence rates.

The **2020 Report on Medical Certification of the Cause of Death** shows that **circulatory system diseases** account for 32.1% of all documented deaths. Among them, hypertension is a major risk factor.

### **What are the steps taken by the government to reduce salt intake?**

FSSAI has implemented the '**Eat Right India**' movement. Its aim is to transform the nation's food system to ensure **secure, healthy, and sustainable nutrition** for all citizens.

FSSAI launched a social media campaign called **Aaj Se Thoda Kam**.

### **What is the way forward to reduce salt intake?**

India needs a **comprehensive national strategy** to curb salt consumption.

A **multi-pronged approach** is needed. **Engaging consumers, industry, and the government** is crucial.

**Collaboration between State and Union governments** is essential to combat hypertension caused by excessive sodium intake.

### 5. [Economic winds favour an India-UK trade agreement](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Economic winds favour an India-UK trade agreement” published in the “Live Mint” on 4th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance-** Trade and economic relationship between India and UK

**News-** The eighth round of India-UK free trade agreement (FTA) discussions will take place soon.

#### **What is the significance of a trade deal between the India and UK?**

Both countries are **top exporters and importers of merchandise and services**. Through the agreement, the UK wants **wider access to the Indian market** for its export items such as Scotch whisky premium cars and legal services.

India is the **third-largest services exporter** to the UK. A trade deal would only widen market access for Indian service firms.

Further, the two countries trade in **similar but distinct products**. Freer import of luxury cars from the UK does not present any significant threat to domestic car manufacturers. They primarily cater to middle-class buyers.

In 2018, the top export industry between the UK and India was ‘**computer programming, consultancy, and related activities**’ for both countries. The two countries have **different and possibly complementary capabilities** within the same industry.

#### **What is the scope of trade deals for India and UK?**

India is likely to sign a trade deal that would **lower tariffs on key products**, subject to **compliance with rules of origin**. The UK may insist on **relaxed regulations on customs procedures and easier regulations on doing business**.

This may have wider benefits for India. It will make the country an **attractive investment destination** for other developed nations too.

A trade deal is likely to **boost the drugs and pharmaceutical industries** of both. But, it will depend on **mutually acceptable recognition of intellectual property rights**.

#### **What are the areas in the deal that need greater attention?**

The trade deal should look after the **Indian economy’s expanding needs**.

There is a greater focus on students getting **work experience and technical training** in the **New Education Policy**. India should negotiate better terms for students to get such training in the UK.

The two countries need to **recognize the educational qualifications** of their counterparts. The **Skill India programme** could benefit from the **UK framework of Vocational Technical Courses**.

An agreement on the mutual recognition of qualifications would help India-educated workers to become **globally competitive**. This will allow **greater movement of skilled workers** between both economies.

**Green technology** presents another avenue for mutual gains between India and the UK. The Indian government has launched several programmes to boost **domestic tourism**.

However, with increasing tourism in Indian natural hotspots comes a need for **environment-friendly initiatives** to reduce waste generation in our rivers and mountains. This presents an opportunity for **investment in green technology**.

### 6. [We should worry about use of defamation law, beyond Rahul Gandhi case](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “We should worry about use of defamation law, beyond Rahul Gandhi case” published in “The Indian Express” on 4th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- India Polity

**Relevance-** Issues related to freedom of speech and expression

**News-** Recently, Rahul Gandhi was convicted for two years in a defamation case that led to his disqualification from Parliament.

#### **How freedom of speech is under threat in India?**

As per a recent report by **Common Cause and Lokniti-CSDS**, nearly two out of three respondents are scared to post their political or social opinions. They fear **legal action**.

Political parties continue to use the **colonial era law** as a weapon against their opponents and journalists.

#### **What are legal aspects related to defamation?**

The criminal offence of defamation is contained under **Section 499 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the civil law** that provides for damages.

In 2016, the defamation law was challenged before the Supreme Court. But it held that the **right to reputation** is no less important than the **right to freedom of speech**.

#### **What are the issues with legal aspects of defamation?**

Civil defamation cases are **prone to abuse**. These cases are impacted by **long case pendency** in the judicial system and **exaggerated claims for damages**.

Civil law is **scattered across judgments** and not properly codified. This creates **more uncertainty and results in the pendency**.

Sometimes, a **reluctant apology** is extracted to achieve a settlement. This does not serve the **cause of justice**.

#### **What are the reasons behind the continuation of defamation laws in the legal system?**

There were **no serious or sustained efforts** towards the repeal of defamation laws. **Sustained political advocacy** on issues of free expression is absent.

Political parties across the spectrum have failed to **articulate popular narratives**. They have not **built constituencies of support** for the repeal of colonial laws.

### 7. [Concerns associated with World Happiness Report: Their Blindness To Our Happiness](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Their Blindness To Our Happiness**” published in **The Times of India** on 4th April 2023.

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

**Relevance:** About concerns associated with World Happiness Report.

**News:** The World Happiness Report was released recently. It has ranked India 126 out of 137 countries.

#### **What are the key highlights of the World Happiness Report?**

**Read here:** [World Happiness Report: Finland happiest country in the world, India ranked 126th: U.N. report](#)

#### **What are the concerns associated with World Happiness Report and India’s ranking in it?**

**Sustainable Development Solutions Network’s (SDSN) capacity:** SDSN is a relatively small organisation, with an annual revenue of around \$11 million, mainly in grants.

**Defining happiness is not feasible:** Happiness is a big, emotive word, just like hunger.

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**Note:** Global Hunger Index ranked India at 107 out of 121 countries, behind North Korea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Rwanda, Nigeria and Congo.

The criteria are depended more on Gallup World Poll. The poll asks people about where they currently are in life (on a scale of 1 to 10) versus where they could best possibly be (which would be a full 10 score). If the respondent gives a low rating, then the country is considered not happy. The main issue with this poll is that if the persons have higher aspirations, then they are considered as unhappy.

**Limited polling:** The poll asks the above questions to 500-2,000 people per country. So, 2,000 people's view is used to decide the global happiness rank of a nation having 1.4 billion people.

**Tilted to rich countries:** The report also has factors which favour rich countries. Such as **a) per capita income** – favouring rich countries and assuming being richer the happier, **b) charity** – rich countries give more, **c) Level of corruption** – low in developed countries, **d) social welfare benefits** – Rich countries have more and **e) How independently a person is making decisions** – individualistic western societies will score well, and collectivist society like India will not.

**Issues with Finland's ranking:** Finland is ranked as the happiest country in the world for six years in a row. However, its ranking has raised certain questions. Such as, **a)** The country is near the North Pole and parts of which have temperatures below -40 °C in the winter and the sun does not rise for nearly two months during parts of the year. Thus, there is a permanent dark for 50 days and 50 nights, **b)** Finnish people, at least as per stereotype, are silent and do not talk much.

Despite that, Finland is ranked as the happiest place on Earth.

**Does not measure the required aspects:** The report does not include **a)** Celebration of festivals, **b)** Depression rates around the world, **c)** Divorce rates, **d)** Time period in which old people meet their kids, **e)** The closeness of grandparents to grandchildren, **f)** The peace people feel due to their relationship with God.

Overall, the report needs some rework, especially with a focus towards developing countries like India.

### 8. Equality and justice, for and beyond queer and trans community

**Source-** The post is based on the article "Equality and justice, for and beyond queer and trans community" published in "The Indian Express" on 5th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Vulnerable sections of the populations

**Relevance-** Issues related to discriminated sections of the society

**News-** The article deals with issues of equality and justice for discriminated communities.

#### **What is progress achieved in India on rights of vulnerable communities?**

In **Naz Foundation v Govt of NCT (2009)**, the Delhi HC decriminalized homosexual sex between adults. The Supreme Court struck down **Section 377** in 2018.

Today, the government is proactive in **HIV/AIDS sensitization**. The **National AIDS Program** has been a crucial step forward. It allows innumerable citizens to have access to **free information, medicines, and healthcare**.

#### **What is needed for true equality and justice of vulnerable communities?**

**First, people-first policies** are required. People are not at the center of government interventions. Implementation of policies and laws continues to be a challenge. Tackling this requires a **change in strategy**. There is a need for **reimagining policy, law, and interventions**. There is a need to focus on **values of empathy, love and respect**. Children should be taught these values. These should be prompted as **core values in our society**.



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Invented names: On India's response to China's fresh attempt to lay claim over parts of Arunachal Pradesh

**Source-** The post is based on the article "Invented names: On India's response to China's fresh attempt to lay claim over parts of Arunachal Pradesh" published in the "The Hindu" on 5th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance-** India and China bilateral relationship

**News-** Recently, China has announced that it would rename 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh.

**What are the factors behind this Chinese move?**

It may be **China's reaction** after the Indian Army failed a PLA attempt to take over a post at **Yangtse in the Tawang sector** in December 2022.

It may be in response to India's decision to hold a **G-20 engagement group meeting on Innovation technology** in Itanagar which the Chinese embassy had boycotted.

It reflects the **low point in ties** and the **lack of meaningful dialogue** for three years since the Chinese troops transgressed the LAC at Galwan in 2020. **Political relations** have not resumed despite many rounds of talks between two sides.

**What is the way forward for India?**

The government shows **more clarity on the nature of its conversations** thus far.

It should **probe the reasons** behind China's moves and the motivation for its **persistent aggressions**. Otherwise, it will be hard to prepare for a **future course of action**.

### 9. [We should harness the emotional energy of India's DPI](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "**We should harness the emotional energy of India's DPI**" published in the "**mint**" on **6th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- e-governance

**Relevance-** Issues related to public digital infrastructure

**News-** The focus of the second G20 Sherpa meeting held at Kumarakom, Kerala was on India's Digital Public Infrastructure.

**Read More** – [India's Digital Public Infrastructure \(DPI\) and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

**What are the achievements of India in DPI?**

**UPI** has over **350 banks on its network with over 260 million unique users**. The network has grown to become the world's **fifth largest digital-payment network** by volume.

**CoWin** has more than **1.1 billion registered users** and every step of their vaccination process is captured by it.

**More than 500 million learning sessions** have been conducted by using the **Diksha app**. It was the key tool for education during the covid pandemic.

**Digilocker** has more than **150 million registered users**.

**1.35 billion people** have enrolled for Aadhaar. **Jan Dhan** has enabled **478 million people** to get bank accounts. India has a **mobile user base of 1.2 billion** across the country. Together, these three developments constitute **Jam trinity**.

The **quality of digital infrastructure** in India is robust. The **co-operation** between the government and the private sector is the **core of the DPI**.

**What is lacking in case of India DPI?**

India has failed to effectively communicate the achievements in DPI to a wider audience. These technological solutions have not been able to create a unified new image for the country.

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### How better communication is possible in case of DPI?

Communication is not a **rational process of citing scientific facts and statistics**. Good communication is all **about emotions**. It is about **real-life stories** from ordinary people's lives. Kerala tagline 'God's Own Country' is an excellent example of good communication. It perfectly captures the emotions a tourist would experience.

Similarly, various DPI programmes can evoke **several positive emotions** in many a user's mind. The Apollo 11 mission in 1969 established US hegemony during the Cold War. Communication about India's DPI could help **uplift the emotional quotient** of the whole country.

### 10. [We need reforms that'll ensure justice prevails](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“We need reforms that'll ensure justice prevails”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **5th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Judiciary. GS3- Security

**Relevance**– Issues related to criminal justice system, and law & order

**News**– The India Justice Report of 2022 was recently released by Tata Trusts.

#### What are the main highlights of India Justice Report, 2022?

**Pending cases in courts**– Covid has slowed down the **pace of case-clearance** by courts. Pending cases increased from **41 million in 2020 to 49 million in 2022**. India has 5.6 million pending for longer than a decade and 190,000 cases pending for over 30 years.

**Lack of judicial strength**– The judiciary has a **lack of capacity**. There are a total of 20,093 judges at work. There exist **15 judges for every million Indians**. It is less than a third of the **50 recommended by the Law Commission in 1987**.

**Overcrowding of prisons**– There has been a sharp rise in **overcrowding of Indian prisons**. There are **30 extra inmates** in 2021 for an existing capacity of 100. 77% of them were **under-trials**. It is up from about 69% two years earlier.

It violates the norm of **“bail not jail”** and shows the **lack of apathy**.

**Policing issues**– The report highlights the issues related to police forces. There exist **state-wise variation** on several counts, like **vacancies, training budgets, police station cameras**.

Except in Union territories governed by the Centre, law-enforcers operate directly under state governments. So politics has a **structural role** in justice delivery.

**Lack of police diversity** is a common problem across states. There is a **lack of participation** on the basis of gender, caste or other markers of identity. It can **lead to biases**.

**Women cops** are in shortages. All police stations are supposed to have **women's helpdesks**. But, 28% do not have this facility and many others don't have women cops ready to respond.

There is a **lack of autonomy** for the police. politicians are reluctant to empower police officers.

### 11. [The takeaways from the UN World Water Conference](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“The takeaways from the UN World Water Conference”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **5th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Global groupings and agreements. GS1- Economic geography

**Relevance**– Issues related to water management at domestic and international level

**News**– Recently, the World Water Conference that was convened by the United Nations

#### What are the important outcomes of the conference?

The conference held a **mid-term review of the Water Action Decade 2018--2028**. It envisages the sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

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The central outcome of the conference was the **international Water Action Agenda**. Under it, Governments, multilateral institutions, businesses, and non-governmental organisations submitted over 670 commitments to address **water security issues**.

### **What are the key issues related to developments at conference?**

The commitments made at the conference **must be scrutinised**. There is a need to see whether they will yield **universal, safe, affordable and equitable access to water**. Meeting this target by 2030 will need **capital expenditures of \$114 billion per year**.

The World Bank estimates that **operations and maintenance for basic water and sanitation service costs** will rise from about \$4 billion to over \$30 billion per year by 2030. It is far more than the **capital costs for basic WASH services**.

As per WB study, funding from regional, national, and international sources prioritises **new water infrastructure** rather than on **water maintenance services**. It results in **decreased service** for water customers.

As per **World Resources Institute**, commitments made by the states lack **proper finance and targets** that are **quantifiable in nature**. Investment of this range would require **valuing water**. This will require robust **water measurement and accounting**.

There are **serious limitations** in our knowledge about the **volume, flux and quality of water** in lakes, rivers, soils and aquifers. There are **huge gaps in water usage data**.

Water is not considered as a **global public good**. It is not considered to be an area of **urgent funding** as compared to climate change. GEF is the only **international funding mechanism** that has provided **grant and concessional loans** for 300 watersheds and an even greater number of aquifers.

### **What are major developments related to India on water management?**

India has committed an **investment of \$240 billion** in the water sector and efforts to **restore groundwater level** at the conference.

A **2021 CAG report** says that **groundwater extraction** in India increased from 58% to 63% between 2004--17. This has been further exacerbated by climate change.

The **revised Groundwater Bill 2017** gives power to State groundwater boards for **creating laws, managing water allocation and other relevant issues**.

The State boards are **understaffed, and lack expertise**. They prioritise **socio political conflicts over groundwater resources**.

### **What are legal aspects related to conference?**

In international law, states have the authority to make **voluntary commitments** to address **issues of global concern**. These commitments are distinguished from other legal forms. They are generally **independent of the commitments of other parties**.

States have taken **voluntary commitments** to curb greenhouse gases and to take measures to **promote sustainability**, even in the absence of a **legally non binding instrument**.

In the case of climate change, these voluntary commitments take place within a broader context of binding agreements: the **UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement**.

The 2023 Water Conference takes place within the **context of SDG 6**, and not within the context of the **UN Water Convention 1997 and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention 1992**. These are **two legally binding legal instruments on regulation of trans-boundary river water courses**.

Common thread between the Water Conference and the two conventions are SDG 6 targets that focus on implementation of **integrated water resources management** at all levels.

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### 12. [The Just In Justice – A detailed report on the legal system shows how and why the poor are its biggest victims](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The Just In Justice – A detailed report on the legal system shows how and why the poor are its biggest victims**” published in **The Times of India** on **6th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About India Justice Report.

**News:** Recently India Justice Report 2022 was released.

#### **About India Justice Report 2022**

Karnataka topped the ranking. Five of the top six places are taken up by states from southern India.

**Significance:** Small but consistent improvements lead to big jumps in ranking. For example, Karnataka jumped 13 places since IJR 2020 to the top in 2022.

**Read here:** [India Justice Report 2022 | Judge vacancies remain endemic](#)

#### **What are the concerns highlighted by the India Justice Report 2022?**

**Foremost challenge in the criminal justice system:** India’s capacity to satisfactorily deliver justice lags behind its demand. For example, 77% of India’s prison population is made up of undertrials, people who haven’t been convicted. On average, they are spending longer time in prison than before. Undertrials serving more than five years in prison have more than doubled to 11,490 in the period between December 2017 and December 2021.

**Worsen India’s capacity to deliver justice:** There are 50 million pending cases, and they are taking longer time to resolve. This will only worsen India’s capacity to deliver justice.

**Lack of legal aid provision:** 70% of litigants in Indian criminal cases are below the poverty line. Between 2020 and 2022, IJR data showed that there was a 67% decline in legal services clinics. This highlights the alarming decline in legal aid provision in India’s justice delivery system. This may be an explanatory factor for the deterioration of other indicators such as the average length of time spent in jail by undertrials.

Overall, the reforms in the justice delivery system are neglected due to excessive focus on [collegium reforms](#). So, this needs a reorientation.

### 13. [Finland joining NATO could affect Delhi too](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Finland joining NATO could affect Delhi too**” published in the **Indian Express** on **6th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About Finland joining NATO.

**News:** Finland has long been neutral in Russia’s prolonged conflict with the West. But recent induction of Finland into the [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation \(NATO\)](#) is seen as a major setback for Russia.

**Note:** *Finland is NATO’s 31st member.*

#### **What are the reasons for Finland joining NATO?**

Finland was part of the Russian empire for a century. Finland’s neutrality in favour of the Soviet Union through the Cold War made “Finlandisation” part of the global diplomatic lexicon.

**Note:** *Finlandization refers to the policy of strict neutrality between Moscow (Russia) and the West that Finland followed during the decades of the Cold War.*

Many of Finland’s small European neighbours have been at the receiving end of Russia’s muscular regional policies over the last decade. But, the prolonged Russian invasion of Ukraine

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has increased fears among Central European countries. Hence, countries like Finland and Sweden seek NATO membership to secure their interests.

**Must read:** [What is 'Finlandization', discussed as a possible option for Ukraine?](#)

### What is the Russian observation of Finland joining NATO?

One of the many justifications Russia said for the aggression against Ukraine was the relentless expansion of NATO closer to Russian borders since the late 1990s. Russia responded that NATO's inclusion of Finland is an "encroachment on Russian security and on Russia's national interests".

**Read more:** [NATO: Historical Context and its Role in Ukraine Conflict – Explained, pointwise](#)

### What are the implications of Finland joining NATO?

**Increases the power of the Western alliance in the Nordic region:** This is because **a)** Finland has maintained a small but capable armed force that is well-trained and resilient, **b)** As the Arctic ice cap melts amidst global warming, the high north has become attractive commercially and contested geopolitically. So, Finland's inclusion in NATO will give an edge to the US and its allies.

**Militarisation of the high north appears inevitable:** Finland and Sweden turn from neutrals to Western allies and China raises its profile in the Arctic in partnership with Russia. This might militarise the Nordic region in future. This might make global governance of the Arctic region increasingly problematic.

–**India** is an observer of the Arctic Council that seeks to promote wide-ranging cooperation in the polar north. Hence, India might want to watch closely the impact of Finland's NATO membership on the Arctic region.

**Must read:** [The role of North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\) in ensuring world peace](#)

### 14. [Open justice – Supreme Court strikes a blow for both media freedom and fair procedure](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**“Open justice – Supreme Court strikes a blow for both media freedom and fair procedure”** published in **The Hindu** on **7th April 2023**.

**“In Media One verdict, SC does some much-needed plain-speaking on national security”** published in the **Indian Express** on **7th April 2023**.

**“Free Speech: 1 Big Bench, 1 Benchmark”** and **“Article 19 Redux”** published in **The Times of India** on **7th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2: Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

**Relevance:** About Freedom of Press in India.

**News:** The Supreme Court in the **Madhyamam Broadcasting Limited vs Union of India case**, annulled the Union government's telecast ban on the Malayalam news channel.

What were the observations made by the court while delivering the judgment?

**Read more:** [Supreme Court says critical views on government policies not anti-establishment](#)

-The Centre said that the media channel is having alleged links with Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JEIH). But the Court points out that JEIH is not a banned organisation. So, "it will be rather precarious for the state to contend that links with the organisation would affect the sovereignty and integrity of the nation."

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-The court agrees that restrictions on press freedom could lead to a “homogenised view on issues that range from socioeconomic polity to political ideologies” which “would pose grave dangers to democracy”.

-The Court could appoint an amicus curiae, who could be given access to the material whenever the state claims immunity from disclosure.

What is the significance of the ruling on Freedom of Press in India?

The ruling highlights **a) An independent press is vital** for the robust functioning of a democratic republic, **b) The “anti-establishment” views of Media channels are not adequate grounds** for invoking the national security exception to free speech, **c) The need for greater openness and more freedom of the press**, without which both justice and democracy are incomplete, **d) Set standards for restrictions** based on national security **and the use of sealed envelopes** by Centre, **e) Enforces** the established principle of natural justice thereby relevant material must be disclosed to the affected party along with ensuring right to appeal.

About the freedom of the press in India

**Article 19** of the Constitution protects the freedom of the media. Like other fundamental rights, this freedom is subject to reasonable restrictions. **Article 19(2)** provides several reasons to curtail free speech “in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence”.

However, the Constitution doesn’t detail a benchmark to test the reasonableness of a restriction. This non-availability of benchmarks resulted in governments at all levels have been using restrictions arbitrarily to clamp down on journalists and thereby restrict media freedom in India.

How courts in the past had different views on freedom of the press?

The court judgments in matters of free speech have often varied. A senior advocate once said that “depending on where your matter goes, who those two judges are, the outcome can be completely, radically different.”

For example, **a) A SC bench** at present is looking at “**hate speech**” without even defining the term, **b) In 2010**, a SC bench upheld the ban on a book that was critical of Islam. In that, the court held “We are not against your right (to free speech). But we are more for public interest and public peace in the country.” **c) In 2017**, the court refused to ban a book which allegedly defamed the entire vysya community, **d) A recent trial court judgment** upheld a complaint against Rahul Gandhi for his alleged remarks on the surname Modi, for which he has been sentenced to two years in prison for **defamation**.

What should be done?

The court’s view on freedom of the press has to be reasonably consistent. SC must not leave matters to individual judges and specific cases to decide the law. As this can only result in contradictory guidelines on free speech. To avoid that, the SC should **constitute a full bench** of seven or nine judges **to review all free speech judgments** (or those curtailing them) of the past, both at the apex court level and the high courts. This bench **a) Can** bring out the real limits to free speech, and the legitimate exercise of this right, **b) Define** hate speech clearly, and **c) Laid** down guidelines for police forces to determine when a speech actually constitutes a threat to public order of a magnitude where things may go out of control.

### 15. [Why is India reaching out to Latin America?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Why is India reaching out to Latin America?**” published in **Live Mint** on **7<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 2 – International Relations**

**Relevance:** **India and Latin America Relations**

**News:** India is trying to strengthen its relations with Latin American countries like Brazil, Argentina, etc. The article explains India’s interest in Latin America.

#### **What has been the history of relations between India and Latin America?**

After independence, **India had a very limited diplomatic and economic reach**. This forced India to prioritise ties with its neighbourhood and major Western powers.

However, **in its first annual report in 1948**, the external affairs ministry said its focus on Latin America was limited despite India’s interest in the region.

**There were also domestic challenges with Latin American countries**. Due to which, these two countries were not able to build their relations.

#### **Why is India now interested in Latin America?**

**First**, trade with Latin America has increased dramatically. Since 2000, **trade has increased by roughly 25% each year and is now close to \$50 billion**. The rise has been driven by industries such as automobiles.

**Second**, India’s desire to diversify its energy dependencies has pushed it towards Latin America. **Indian energy majors like ONGC are active in Colombia and Bharat Petroleum in Brazil**.

**Renewable energy is also a priority**, with opportunities for collaboration in ethanol and green hydrogen.

**The region also contains critical deposits of resources** such as copper and lithium, which will be **critical to India’s energy transformation ambitions**.

#### **How has Latin America responded to India’s outreach?**

Latin America has welcomed increased Indian interest and has tried to attract investment. The Panamanian foreign minister pointed out that **Latin American nations can connect Indian companies with the wider Americas market**.

The region has suffered due to Covid, Ukraine war and their economies are also struggling with poverty and inequality. In such a scenario, increased economic engagement with India is a key priority for many of the region’s economies.

#### **What are the challenges?**

**India’s trade with Latin America is negligible in comparison to China’s enormous \$450 billion trading in that region. China is also a major lender to the region**.

While other businesses are competing to take advantage of Latin America’s abundant natural resources, **Indian businesses have lagged behind**.

Hence, in order to overcome these challenges, **India will need to step up its economic diplomacy and join regional economic institutions like the Inter-American Development Bank**.

### 16. [Schooling Reforms – On National Curriculum Framework](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Schooling Reforms**” published in the “**The Times of India**” on **7th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance-** Issues related to educational reforms

**News-** The draft National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for School Education 2023 is proposed by the government.

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### **What are some facts about the draft National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for School Education 2023?**

It has recommended **major changes in assessment** across different levels of schooling. It envisages **students moving across arts, commerce and science** more freely, an increase in **self-assessment**, and board exams taking place at least twice a year.

### **What is the way forward for proper implementation of the draft National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for School Education 2023?**

The document should be put in the **public domain** soon. That will remove **unjustified fears**. It will also encourage stakeholders to start a **constructive engagement** with reform proposals. Education policymakers should take lessons from the **past experiments**. **Continuous and comprehensive evaluation** was ushered in 2009 but has to end in 2017. **Good ideas with poor execution** are not successful.

### 17. NCERT textbook revision

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**NCERT textbook revision: Why it happens every few years & what makes it controversial**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” and “**History textbook deletions: Why NCERT argument that it is trying to reduce pressure on students is weak**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on 7th April 2023.

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

**Relevance-** Issues related to syllabus and curriculum of textbooks

News- Recently, revision of NCERT books has created political controversy.

What are the revisions in NCERT textbooks?

The textbook rationalisation has resulted in some of the most sweeping changes in the curriculum since the NDA government came to power.

It includes removing all references to the 2002 Gujarat riots, reducing content related to the Mughal era and the caste system, and dropping chapters on protests and social movements, European presence in the Americas, etc.

Have there been controversies around NCERT textbooks earlier?

NCERT textbooks over the years have become the government’s medium for political communication and a battleground of competing ideologies.

New textbooks drafted in 2002-03 were criticised for portraying the Muslim rulers of India as savage invaders, and the mediaeval period as era of Islamic domination.

The UPA government made its own changes to school textbooks. In 2012, cartoons that were deemed derogatory to Jawaharlal Nehru and B R Ambedkar were removed from political science textbooks.

Why are controversies created by NCERT textbooks revision?

Many of these changes are seen as political. There are allegations that the rationalisation aims to align the curriculum with the ideology of the ruling party. Some of the changes appear to match the views expressed by members of the ruling establishment.

The rationale for the dropping of the various chapters is that these deletions would not affect the knowledge of children and an unnecessary burden would be removed.

But deleted chapters bring a different level of knowledge and understanding to the students.

It is not a simple case of reducing the load. It is because many of the deleted chapters have not been covered by previous classes. Furthermore, the level of discussion varies in textbooks for different classes. For example, chapter ‘Confrontation of Cultures’ that has been deleted from the Class 11 history textbook, has not been covered anywhere previously.



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It is the deletion from the Class 12 history book that is the most striking. Most of the chapter contains fresh material and perspectives to understand the developments that took place during the mediaeval period.

How to ensure that changes made in NCERT books are not questioned?

It would not be a proper thing to never bring changes in textbooks. New research may throw up interesting sources or interpretations of periods, institutions, rulers and the common people.

But these have to be based on rigorous research. Ideological orientation should not decide the history curriculum.

### 18. [Representation in India's police forces](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Representation in India's police forces**” published in **The Hindu** on **7<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Social Justice

**Relevance:** Findings of India Justice Report 2022.

**News:** India Justice Report 2022 has been recently released.

**What are the findings of the report for the police in India?**

**Overall Performer:** Overall, the **Telangana police have bagged the top rank** among States while **West Bengal has come last**.

**Overall Vacancies:** The overall police vacancies increased from 20.3% of the sanctioned strength to 22.1% between January 2020 and January 2022.

**Vacancies for Police constables:** West Bengal was the worst performer among large and mid-size States with vacancies amounting to 44.1% of the sanctioned strength.

**Kerala was at the top with constable vacancies** making up 4.6% of the sanctioned strength.

**Vacancies for Police officers:** Bihar has the highest percentage of vacancies at 53.8% as against the sanctioned strength.

**Must Read:** [The Just In Justice – A detailed report on the legal system shows how and why the poor are its biggest victims](#)

**How have States performed in fulfilling their quotas for Women, SC and ST communities in the Police?**

**Karnataka was the only State** to meet its SC, ST, and Other backward classes quotas.

**Scheduled Caste**

**Police Officers:** Among **large and mid-sized States**, Gujarat at 131% was the best performer in terms of the percentage of actual SC police officers to its reservation quota while Uttar Pradesh came last with 43% SC officers against its quota.

**Police Constables:** Karnataka had 116% of SC constables against its quota, while Haryana had the lowest at 63%.

**Small States:** As for small States, Goa and Sikkim were the best performers for the percentage of SC officers and constables, respectively.

**Scheduled Tribes**

**Police Officers:** Karnataka, at 176%, was the best performer on the police officer level, going beyond its reserved ratio.

**Police Constables:** Bihar fulfilled its quota by 278%, while Punjab came in last in large and medium States at 0.01%.

**Women**

Most States have their own specific quotas for the number of women required in the police force.

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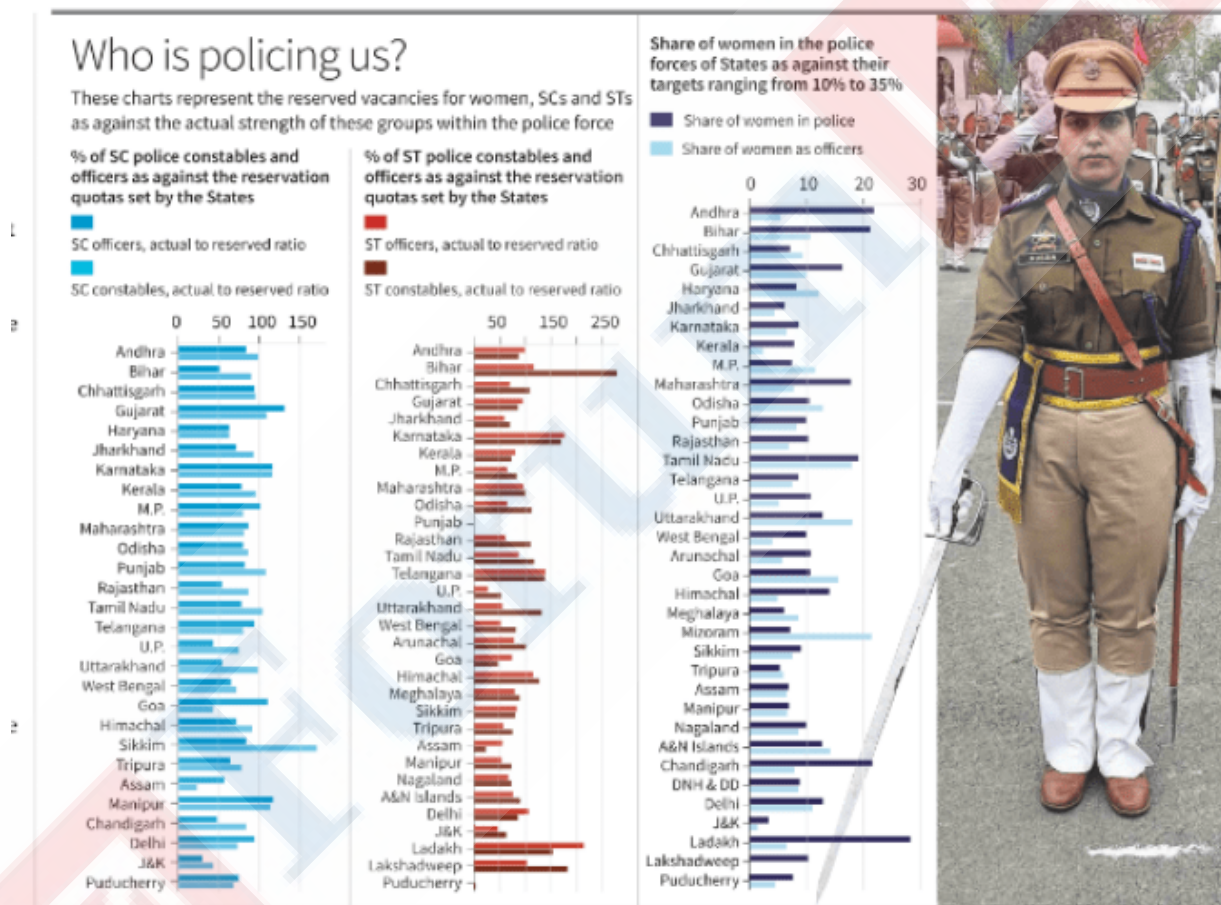
**For instance**, six UTs and nine States have a target of 33% reservation for women while it varies from Bihar's 35% to 10% in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura. **Five States/UTs, including Kerala and Mizoram, have no reservations.**

As per the findings, **no State which had the 33% criteria, managed to meet it** and it will take another 24 years to have 33% women in police forces across States.

However, **among large and medium States**, Andhra Pradesh which reserves 33% of overall police posts for women, performed the best with 21.8%. Jharkhand was the worst performer with its share of women in police being just 6.2%.

**In small States**, Himachal Pradesh was at the top with 14% while Tripura came in last with just 5.3%. **Among Union Territories**, Ladakh had 28.3% women in police, while Jammu and Kashmir had just 3.3%.

### Why is India



Source: The Hindu

### [19. Spotlight again on Doklam: India-Bhutan relationship and why China remains the dragon in the room](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Spotlight again on Doklam: India-Bhutan relationship and why China remains the dragon in the room**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on **8th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance**– India and Bhutan relationship

**News**– Recently, Bhutan’s King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck visited India.

#### **What are recent developments in Bhutan-China relations?**

In an interview, Prime Minister Tshering said Bhutan and China had come to understand each other and were close to **resolving their boundary disputes**.

Tshering denied there were **Chinese incursions** in Bhutan’s territory. There exist **no Chinese installations** in Bhutan and there is **no intrusion** in the Bhutan territory.

As per Bhutan PM, Doklam is a **junction point** between India, China, and Bhutan. It is not up to Bhutan alone to solve the problem. There are three equal countries, each counting for a third.

As soon as the other two parties are also ready, Bhutan is ready to discuss the border dispute.

The two sides have agreed to simultaneously push forward the implementation of all the steps of the **Three-Step Roadmap**.

The “**Three-Step Roadmap for Expediting the China-Bhutan Boundary Negotiations**” refers to an agreement reached between the two countries in April 2021.

The two sides have also agreed to increase the **frequency of the Expert Group Meetings** and to keep contact through diplomatic channels.

In January, Bhutan and China had held **talks in Kunming** as part of an ongoing dialogue on the border issue.

**Kunming talks** focussed on Doklam and areas near the **India-Bhutan-China trijunction** in the west, and the **Jakarlung and Pasamlung pasturelands** in the north.

#### **What is the Indian position on Bhutan and Doklam issue?**

Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra reiterated that Tshering had not said anything different from India’s own position on this issue.

S Jaishankar in 2017-18 referred to the “**Common Understanding**” reached between the **Special Representatives** of New Delhi and Beijing. As per it, **trijunction boundary points** would be finalised in consultation with those third countries.

India holds that the 2017 Chinese actions in Doklam amounted to an attempt to change the **Bhutan-China border unilaterally**. Therefore, it violated two **agreements with Bhutan in 1988 and 1998**.

New Delhi has always held that an agreement between Bhutan and China is the **sovereign decision** of the two countries. Bhutan is mindful of Indian concerns.

There is **close consultation and coordination** between the two sides on security issues of mutual interest. This is also written into the **2007 Treaty of Friendship**.

#### **What is the Chinese stand on Doklam?**

China wants to move the **tri junction point** from **Batang La further south to Gyomochen**. It is a **violation of the 2012 agreement** with India. Control of this area would give China a **strategic advantage** over India. it will bring China closer to the “**chicken’s neck**”.

Beijing wants a **land swap** with China. It wants to get Doklam in exchange for concessions on disputed territory in the north.

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China looks at Bhutan as a **pressure point** on India. Beijing's renaming of places in Arunachal Pradesh, and its "freeze" on the visas of two Indian journalists, came during the King's visit to India.

### **What are the concerns of India on recent developments in Bhutan and China relations?**

A China-Bhutan agreement on the boundary, especially if it includes Doklam, would have **direct and immediate implications** for India's security.

Tshering's denial of Chinese incursions in Bhutanese territory has surprised New Delhi. Chinese villages and infrastructure have come up in Doklam.

**For more readings-** <https://blog.forumias.com/india-bhutan-relations-and-its-significance>

### 20. India must be alert to China's cartographic deception in Arunachal Pradesh

**Source-** The post is based on the article "**India must be alert to China's cartographic deception in Arunachal Pradesh**" published in the "**The Indian Express**" on **8th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance-** India and China relationship

**News-** Recently, China renamed some places in Arunachal Pradesh.

### **How has China been consistently involved in cartographic deceptions?**

In the early 1950s, China started indulging in **cartographic deception**. It made claims to large parts of Indian territory. The Indian leadership looked at these claims as a **negotiable misunderstanding** and trusted Zhou Enlai.

India introduced "**forward policy**" in October 1962 to assert Indian authority over territories. Nehru believed that the Chinese would never attack India. In 1959, he condemned the British Tibetan expert George Patterson for spreading rumours about the Chinese.

Presently, President Xi Jinping continues to follow the **old Maoist strategy of violating sovereign national boundaries** of neighbours using cartography as a weapon.

The recent renaming of villages, unpopulated areas, rivers and hills in Arunachal Pradesh by the State Council is another example of that cartographic deception.

### **Is there any basis for the Chinese historical claim over Arunachal Pradesh?**

Never in known history did Arunachal Pradesh have any remote contact with China. There was never any **Chinese presence** there.

Tibetans from Lhasa used to travel to [Kolkata](#) via Sikkim and sail onwards to mainland China. At most, the Monpas of Tawang spoke Tibetan.

The only time in recent history the Chinese army came close to Arunachal Pradesh's borders was during the final years of the **Qing dynasty in 1910-12**. It entered Kham as part of a campaign to crush the revolt by the Khampas in eastern Ladakh.

Some **pro-China historians** claimed that Tawang was under the **rule of Lhasa** before 1950. The sixth Dalai Lama was born in Tawang in 1683. But, Tawang remained **largely independent** of any outside authority. Historical records also negate such claims.

Through the **Shimla Agreement** between the British and Tibetan governments in 1914, the **McMahon Line** became the international boundary between India and Tibet. Tawang fell south of the McMahon Line. The McMahon Line is branded as a "**colonial**" imposition by the Chinese.

### **What are the aspirations of local people of Arunachal Pradesh?**

People of western Arunachal were never **subjects of any outside power**. They negotiated with the British when the latter made an outreach in the early 1900s.

After Independence, Indian administration focused on giving primacy to the **development of the region** rather than exerting authority. People in NEFA were more keen on some kind of a visible Indian authority over the region.

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When the Chinese invaded Arunachal Pradesh in October 1962, they made special efforts to convince them about the **greater racial affinity** between them. But, the Chinese couldn't win over the hearts and minds of the people of NEFA.

After the war Indian officials returned to the region in early 1963. People **extended a warm welcome**.

### 21. What Our Embassies Owe Indian Mothers Abroad

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“What Our Embassies Owe Indian Mothers Abroad”** published in **The Times of India** on **8<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Indian Diaspora

**Relevance:** concerns associated with Indian parents in Europe

**News:** Indian families in European countries often face problems with their child being taken away by the child protection services (**CPS**). The children are put in foster care giving the reason that parents are unable to look after the child.

**What is the recent case about?**

**A seven-month-old daughter was taken away from her parents in September 2021 by CPS in Germany** because the baby suffered an injury in the perineum, the sensitive area between the vagina and the anus.

The family provided the explanation of the injury but it was rejected. The baby was put into foster care.

In February 2022, after a full investigation, police closed the case. But the baby was not restored to her parents.

Now, since CPS has not been able to prove charges of sexual abuse, **it is trying to prove that the parents, especially the mother, are incapable of looking after their baby.**

The parents' plea that the child is being deprived of her religion and culture has been dismissed by CPS as being irrelevant. Even the visiting hours of parents to their child in the foster have been cut.

**CPS is pushing for the child to remain permanently in German foster care.** In their opinion, the child will be unsafe if she returns to India.

**The court has provided a window to the parents, the government and CPS to work out an agreement before the next scheduled hearing in May.**

**How has the Indian authority responded?**

Usually, **the Indian Embassy does not intervene in the cases which involve criminal charges like that of sexual abuse.**

However, since the criminal charges have been taken away, it was required by the Indian Embassy to intervene into the matter.

The **intervention of the foreign ministry is absolutely crucial** in this case as the court has provided a window of agreement.

Further, **only an official governmental intervention at the highest level brought babies' back to their parents in the previous cases.**

**For example,** Aryan came back to his parents in Norway in 2016 with the help of then Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj and in 2011-12, the government intervention helped Sagarika to get her child back from foster care in Norway.

Therefore, the government must take urgent and required measures to bring the baby back to her parents and help other parents who are trapped in such cases.

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### 22. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana: Credit saturation for livelihoods

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana: Credit saturation for livelihoods” published in **Live Mint** on **10<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Government Policies & Interventions in Various Sectors

**Relevance:** About Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

**News:** Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) has completed eight years. The article analyzes the scheme and provides its achievements.

#### About [Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana \(PMMY\)](#)

It is one of the flagship schemes of the Union government to **encourage self-employment**. The scheme **targets micro and own-account enterprises** that are mostly engaged in manufacturing, processing, trading and services.

These units were largely self-financed or relied on moneylenders because the country’s formal architecture was unable to reach out to them and meet their financial requirements.

Hence, the **PMMY was launched to bridge the gap between a large unbanked sector and formal lenders**.

The scope of the scheme has widened with the time. **For example**, initially it covered income-generating activity only in the sectors of manufacturing, trading and services.

However, **since 2016-17, activities allied with agriculture and their support services promoting livelihoods** have been brought under its ambit.

**Read More:** [Reserve Bank flags rising bad assets from Mudra loans](#)

#### What has been the social impact of PMMY?

**On Social Groups:** The PMMY has benefitted all segments of Indian society such as General, SC/STs and OBCs. There has been an **increase in the participation of OBCs and SCs in availing the loans**.

**On Women:** The scheme has given impetus to women’s entrepreneurship. Disbursements to women entrepreneurs registered an average growth of 23% in the scheme’s first four years. In 2022, it surpassed its pre-covid level, registering a robust growth of 28%.

**On Minority Communities:** The scheme has been able to cater to the requirements of minorities. **Loans to members of minority groups touched an all-time high in 2022**, with their overall share at 10%. Shishu and Kishore loans accounted for 85% of total cumulative disbursement.

#### How has the scheme performed across different states?

One of the objectives of India’s growth policy has been to bridge the divide between the thriving western and lagging eastern parts of the country. As per a report, there has been a significant dispersion of the loan amount across states.

**For example**, states such as **Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Bihar** have recorded all-round gains from the PMMY. **West Bengal and Tripura** have also seen a rise in their total share, indicating an eastward flow of beneficiaries.

Developed regions such as the **national capital region, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa** have seen their shares decline, even though they dominate the scheme in absolute terms.

#### What has been the overall performance of PMMY?

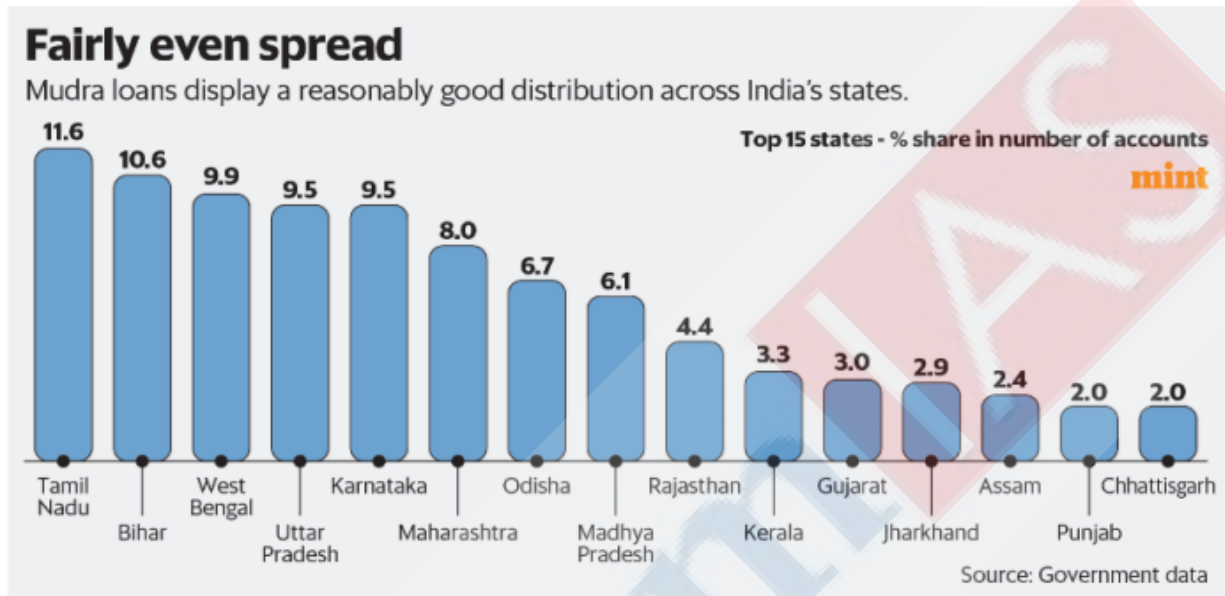
As per a survey, the scheme had helped in **generating 11.2 million net additional jobs during the period 2015 to 2018**.

Data as on 24 March 2023 puts the scheme’s cumulative disburse amount at ₹22.65 trillion. The **share of Shishu loans is the highest, at 40%**, suggesting that the PMMY has largely supported first-time entrepreneurs.

### What can be the way ahead?

It is crucial that PMMY reap the benefits of 5G technology and e-commerce with popularization of **Mudra cards**.

Encouraging the registration and formalization of own-account enterprises could be another way of taking this scheme to new levels.



Source: Mint

### 23. [India, China and Bhutan triologue can bring clarity on borders](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**India, China and Bhutan triologue can bring clarity on borders**” published in **The Indian Express** on **10<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – India and its Neighborhood Relations

**Relevance:** Border issues between Bhutan and China

**News:** The article discusses various issues with the Bhutan and China boundary demarcation and stand of India on the issue.

#### **What are the issues with the demarcation of Bhutan-China boundary?**

There are issues over the natural borders. **The Chumbi Valley** is one of them.

The valley is important for strategic and economic reasons and has a significant relational value given its proximity to the Amochhu river. **The valley is also known as the Bhutanese route to Tibet.**

The valley reflects **two broad principles** guiding the demarcations of borders in the Himalayas:

- **The Thalweg Doctrine:** It emphasises the idea of map-making by identifying rivers as the central point and measuring the boundary from the lowest point of a riverbed.
- **The water-parting principle:** It identifies territory with a concerned watershed, where the boundary is determined by the highest elevation surrounding that particular lake or river segment.

These both principles have been merged in the ongoing border negotiations between China and Bhutan.

The dispute in the north-west sector of the China-Bhutan border has revolved **around the watershed of the Chumbi Valley**, and the height of certain Himalayan ranges such as **Mt Gipmochi**.

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### What are the issues over Mt Gipmochi?

China has legally claimed the boundary line from Mt Gipmochi, through the **Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890**. The **Amochhu river flows adjacent to Mt Gipmochi**.

However, both India and Bhutan have rejected these claims and stated that the boundary line should follow from Batangla, Merugla and Sinchula ranges as these peaks are higher than Gipmochi.

**The Chinese have ignored** these assertions and have **continued to build villages along the west bank of Amochhu river**.

Therefore, the **Thalweg Doctrine is the compromise formula** for solving the disputed claims.

### How has India responded to the border dispute between Bhutan and China?

Since, the bilateral relations between Bhutan and China is of strategic importance to India, India has said that **the tri-junction would be resolved trilaterally**.

In this regard, the **15th round of Sino-Indian Special Representative (SR) dialogue, 2012**, becomes significant.

The India-China agreement on the Working Mechanism on Consultation and Coordination was made in SR dialogue of 2012.

However, China has said that the SRs discussed bilateral, regional and global issues. **Terms such as “tri-junction” and “consultation with third countries” are absent in the 15th round of SR dialogue of 2012**.

China has also said that issue lies more with the 1890 Convention than with the SR dialogue of 2012.

**Must Read:** [India – Bhutan relations and its significance – Explained](#)

### What lies ahead?

It is important that a **trilogue is initiated**. Opening communication channels can minimise uncertainties as questions of peace and conflict cannot be resolved by potential stand-offs (like Doklam) in the future.

### 24. [AAP now national party; NCP, Trinamool lose tag: How is a ‘national party’ in India defined](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“AAP now national party; NCP, Trinamool lose tag: How is a ‘national party’ in India defined”** published in **The Indian Express** on **11<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance

**Relevance:** About national and state parties

**News:** The Election Commission has recognised the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as a national party, while revoking that status of the All-India Trinamool Congress, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI).

### What is a national party?

A party with a national **presence is known as a national party**. These are usually bigger parties like Congress and BJP. However, **some smaller parties are also recognized as national parties**.

### What are the current National Parties?

The BJP, Congress, CPI(M), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), National People’s Party (NPP) and the AAP are the national parties now.

### How is a party recognized as a national party?

[Click Here to Read](#)

### How is a party recognized as a state party?

[Click here to Read](#)



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A party needs to have at least one MP for every 25 members, or any fraction allotted to the state in the Lok Sabha.

### **How did AAP fulfil the criteria of being a national party?**

AAP has very large vote shares in Delhi and Punjab. In the Goa Assembly elections last year, it received 6.77% of the vote. This way it already fulfilled the criteria for recognition as a **state party in three states**.

It then required 6% of the vote in the Assembly elections in either Himachal or Gujarat last year to be recognized in a fourth state.

It received almost 13% vote in Gujarat which was more than double the required to be recognized as a state party there. **That made it to four states** and qualified for the national party.

### 25. As the Ukraine war grinds on, Russia, India seek ways to keep defence trade afloat

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**As the Ukraine war grinds on, Russia, India seek ways to keep defence trade afloat**” published in **The Hindu** on **11<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** concerns associated with import payments to Russia

**News:** Russia is currently facing problems with India in resolving payment problems for its defence exports.

### **What are some of the defence systems being exported by Russia to India?**

Russia is now carrying out numerous large contracts with India, including the **S-400 systems and two Project 11356 frigates**.

The other deals include procurement of additional and modernisation of existing **Sukhoi Su-30 MKI and upgrade of MIG-29s**.

Moreover, **India’s total imports from Russia rose by five times from \$8.5 billion in April 2022 to \$41.6 billion in February 2023**, driven mainly by oil supplies.

As per Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), **Russia’s share of arms imports to India fell from 69% in 2012-17 to 46% in 2017-21**, while Russia remained the key defense supplier to India.

However, concern lies with the payment of the imports.

### **What are the concerns with payment?**

Currently, Russian banks create **vostro accounts** with authorized dealer banks in India and pay in rupees, although **Russia wants to pay in rubles**.

However, the problems with India in adopting ruble payment are – **a)** the concerns of the Indian financial sector which is overall slowly adopting new mechanisms, and **b)** lack of trust on the Russian ruble.

After suffering a major shock last year, **India is doubtful about the ruble**, and there is an understanding that it is almost impossible to evaluate it correctly.

Therefore, the India has no particular interest in trading in the Russian currency and thus, India relies on payments in the rupee.

### **What is the way ahead?**

Russia is upgrading its weapons after testing them in the real time war with Ukraine. This gives Russia a great advantage in terms of defense exports.

Therefore, the issue of payments needs to be resolved in the upcoming meeting between the two nations.

26. [Do the wealthy influence policy-making more across all forms of democracy?](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Do the wealthy influence policy-making more across all forms of democracy?” published in “The Hindu” on 11th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- polity

**Relevance-** Issues related to democracy

**News-** The article explains the study ‘Affluence and Influence in a Social Democracy’ published in American Political Science Review (2023).

**What are the issues with democracies?**

In the real world, no democracy is perfect. Affluent people enjoy a disproportionately **greater influence over policy-making** compared to the average citizen.

As per a study, public policy favors the affluent section at the expense of the poor and the middle classes. American democracy has certain unique features like **heavy reliance of political parties** on private donations. It makes policy-making **unresponsive to the non-affluent**.

Three different studies were conducted in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. In all these countries, policy was **skewed in favour of the affluent**.

**How is Norway different from other democracies?**

Public policy is skewed toward the preferences of the affluent. But the opinions of the poor and the middle classes also matter.

On economic issues, the preferences of both the poor and the rich seemed to matter almost equally. The **link between money and politics** was much weaker than in the U.S.

**Why are the wealthy in Norway not able to influence policy-making?**

**Universal welfarism-** The first factor is Norway’s **universal welfare schemes** and high levels of **wealth redistribution**. Universal welfare measures benefit every citizen. This contrasts with ‘**targeted schemes**’ which only benefit needy people.

It generates **resentment among the non-needy people** about how their tax money is being given away in ‘freebies’. It ensures their **legitimacy and endorsement** across classes.

**Income equality-** Norway has one of the **lowest levels of income inequality** in the world. So, the affluent section does not enjoy resource advantage to influence politics.

Resource rich people are not able to convert money power into political influence through **political party funding**. Here, the contrast between Norway and the U.S. is sharp.

Political candidates in the U.S. rely on **large donations from individuals and organizations** to run their campaigns. But parties in Norway get two-thirds of their financing from **state subsidies**.

Television advertising is a huge **campaign expense** in American elections. But **political advertising** on television is banned in Norway. This brings down the campaign costs. It also reduces the effect of disparities in spending power between candidates and makes the campaign process **less vulnerable to private wealth**.

In India, there is the opposite scenario. **Electoral bonds** empower wealthy private entities to make donations to political parties with **zero transparency**.

**Strong trade unions-** Norway has historically had **strong trade unions**. They have been able to **influence economic and social policy** through their close political links with the Norwegian Labor Party. It acts as a **counter force to the influence of the wealthy**.

Norway has **vast reserves of oil and natural gas**. It enables the government to maintain generous welfare schemes while imposing lower tax rates. It fulfils the needs of both the poor through subsidies and the wealthy through low taxes.

**Less wealthy politicians-** The country’s political class is not particularly wealthy. The median wealth among Norwegian MPs is zero.

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Norwegian laws require **proportionate representation of women** in government institutions. Women on average have lower income than men. Their **higher levels of representation** results in greater political influence for women. It translates into **greater political influence** for lower-income citizens.

### 27. A crucial six months for India-U.S. ties

**Source-** The post is based on the article “A crucial six months for India-U.S. ties” published in “The Hindu” on 11th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance-** India and US bilateral relationship

**News-** The next six months are going to be crucial for India-U.S. ties. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to head to the U.S. in June, and U.S. President Joe Biden is expected to visit India for the G20 summit later this year.

#### **What are the areas of divergence between India and the US?**

The U.S. wants India to change its **stance on the Ukraine crisis**. India wants a **stronger position** by the US against China.

India is reluctant to sever its **stable relations with Russia**. Moscow has just released its **foreign policy strategy** in which it has identified China and India as its **main allies**.

India is also the president of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization**, a forum that includes China and Russia. On the other hand, the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** wants greater participation from Delhi.

#### **What are the areas of convergence between India and the US?**

The **India-U.S. Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology** is expected to expand **strategic technology partnership and defence industrial cooperation** between the governments, businesses, and academic institutions of the two countries.

The **Indo-Pacific partnership** is aimed at promoting **security and economic growth, increasing trade and investment, and enhancing connectivity** in the region.

The partnership is based on the **shared vision of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region** that is respectful of the **sovereignty and territorial integrity** of all countries.

The partnership involves a range of initiatives. It includes **joint military exercises, information-sharing on security issues, and collaboration on economic and infrastructure development projects**. It also involves cooperation in areas such as **counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, and maritime security**.

One of the key objectives of the Indo-Pacific partnership is to counter the **growing influence of China** in the region. Both countries share concerns about China's **aggressive actions** in the South China Sea, its **expanding military presence** in the region, and its **Belt and Road Initiative**.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in **diversifying supply chains** away from China. The reasons are **geopolitical tensions, trade disputes**, and concerns about **over-reliance on a single country**.

India's **growing consumer market** makes it an attractive destination for U.S. businesses. India has a relatively **low-cost labour force and an abundance of skilled workers**. The government has also implemented policies aimed at attracting foreign investment and promoting economic growth.

The U.S. and Indian governments have taken steps to promote closer **economic ties and facilitate investment**. For example, the **U.S.-India Strategic Energy Partnership**, aims to enhance cooperation in areas such as **energy security and access, and climate change**.

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### How has the India-U.S. relationship seen ups and downs over time?

**Ups** – The **nuclear deal, liberalisation of markets, and the outsourcing of Indian techies** for U.S. companies are a few key moments of the relationship.

Indian Americans are among the most successful immigrants in the U.S. India needs the **knowledge, skill and investment of the diaspora** to regain its global position.

The **Green Revolution** had transformed India from a **shortage economy** to one with **surplus food** with help from the US. The U.S. has also played an important role in making India an IT superpower. Many persons of Indian origin are working in Silicon Valley companies.

The U.S. and India are also partners in **combating climate change**. This involves a wide range of initiatives. It includes promoting **renewable energy, joint research and development projects, and investment in renewable energy infrastructure**. The two countries are also aligned on the importance of **space technology**.

**Downs** – In the past, there was a **trust deficit** between India and the U.S. India feels that the U.S. has not given support to it and has instead provided support to Pakistan.

The American pull-out from Afghanistan does not inspire confidence in the U.S. as a **trusted partner**. The U.S. has been flagging issues related to **terrorism, human rights and democracy** in India.

### 28. [Right lessons – on NCERT Syllabus Revision](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Right lessons” published in “The Hindu” on 11th April 2023.

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

**Relevance-** Issues related to syllabus and curriculum

**News-** Recently, controversy has been created by revision in NCERT textbooks.

**Read more –** [NCERT Textbook Revision](#)

### Why do textbooks and pedagogy need to be revised periodically?

Knowledge expands continuously. **Syllabus revision** is essential for a **robust education system**. Teaching to the younger generation is a **collective decision of a society**. Formal education is a critical part of it. The **values and ethics** of the collective are reflected in education.

As any society matures, it might be able to see the darker episodes of the past. It is important to decide the **appropriate levels** at which learners are introduced to **various levels of knowledge**.

### When does the change in syllabus become problematic?

Sometimes, this exercise is carried out in a **politically partisan manner**, and in **disregard of expertise**. It turns out to be toxic when **strife, not harmony**, is promoted through formal education.

### What is the way forward for syllabus change?

India’s growth and development depends almost entirely on educating the young population with **vocational and social skills**.

Youngsters should turn into **caring citizens of a pluralistic nation**. They should learn history with the aim of not **repeating its tragedies** in order to build a **harmonious future**.

There should be wider, more **transparent consultations** in shaping the curriculum at all levels.

### 29. Who will regulate the regulators?

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Who will regulate the regulators?” published in “The Indian Express” on 12th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Statutory, Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies

**Relevance-** Issues related to governing board of regulators

**News-** The establishment of statutory regulators constitutes one of the most significant governance reforms of the last century. The Governance of these agencies centers around their governing boards (GB).

**What are the issues with the governance of regulators in India?**

**Structure of the board-** The law creates a board governed by a board, an authority by an authority, a council by a council, a commission by a commission. The **superintendence, direction, and management** of the affairs of this board vests in a board of members.

The former board is an entity, while the latter is its governing body. Most statutes do not distinguish between the two. It leads to **mix-up or reversal of roles.**

**Independence of the board-** It is difficult for an entity to take decisions about itself with **complete objectivity** or **hold itself accountable** for performance. So, decisions about a company are placed with the board of directors.

The governing board’s primary responsibility is to hold the **management accountable.** It may be hard for a governing board to hold the management accountable if its members are **only managers.**

**Nominees in the board-** the government has a few official nominees on the GBs of regulators. The views of such nominees carry **disproportionately more weight in the decision-making** process.

The government is often a **market participant** and subjected to **pressures from various interest groups.** It may not always be possible for the official nominee to take an **objective position** in all matters coming up before the GB.

**Professionalism of the board-** The **independence of a regulator** depends on the professional strength of the leaders. The **whole-time members** should be able to handle the **influence of interest groups and the pressures of fear and favor.** A term of 3-5 years for these positions comes in the way of such strength.

An individual with **demonstrated capability** would not join a regulator for a **3-5 year tenure.** Further, tenure with the retirement age of 65 years leads to selection of individuals who have retired or are near to retirement.

A term of three years is very short for members to **acquire the knowledge, expertise, and efficiency.** Sixty is not an appropriate age to learn entirely new things and achieve mastery.

**What are the steps required to improve the governance of regulators in India?**

The GB needs to have **appropriate external representation.** Most statutes do not provide for this representation.

The presence of a **few eminent persons** in the governing board as part-time members is one of the **more effective options.** They are not  **beholden to the management.**

Therefore, the number of **part time members** should match the number of **whole-time members** on the governing board. The process of selection of part time members needs to be **robust and should inspire confidence.**

GB should not have any **nominee from the government.** Ideally, a regulator may not have any nominee at all. The nominees generally have a **conflict of interests.** They look at every proposal that comes before the GB from the perspective of the organisations they represent.

Regulators must **attract younger individuals**, who have **demonstrated their capability** in the relevant field, for a **reasonable period of service**.

A regulator in India typically performs three functions, namely, **quasi-legislative, executive, and quasi-judicial**.

There should be a **separate organisational unit** responsible for each of the distinct types of functions. These units should maintain distance from one another to act as **mutual checks and balances**. This will address public law concerns relating to **separation of powers**.

The statute should mandate the GB only to perform **quasi-legislative functions** and to provide direction to the organisation. GB should be enabled to **delegate executive and administrative tasks** to different functionaries in the organisation.

### 30. Technology can democratise education

**Source-** The post is based on the article **“Technology can democratise education”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **12th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance-** Issues related to importance of technology for education

**News-** The article explains the importance of education to achieve the vision of Amrit Kaal.

#### **What is the potential of the Indian economy?**

India is the world's **third-largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP)**.

A significant contributing factor to prosperity is **India's young population**.

**43% of Indians** are aged 25 in 2023. The majority of the population expected to remain of working age until at least 2100.

According to the Confederation of Indian Industry, if the country's **working-age population** is productively employed, its GDP can grow from **\$3 trillion to \$9 trillion by 2030 and \$40 trillion by 2047**.

#### **How can India be a global leader in the near future by investing in education?**

The key to unlock India's potential lies in **education technology or EdTech**.

Education will play a pivotal role in ushering the nation into the Knowledge Age. In Amrit Kaal, every child, regardless of socio-economic background, will have access to quality education. The next 25 years will be defined by how well we can educate our people.

There is a need to **democratise technology** and unleash its full potential. It will propel the nation towards its **Amrit Kaal goals**.

The key to unlock India's potential lies in **education technology or EdTech**. Digital technology is the foundation of the modern ecosystem. The **Digital India initiative and National Education Policy** is a massive leap in the right direction.

**Intelligence-embedded virtual classrooms, multi-disciplinary institutions, simulated field visits**, and schools that **digitally disseminate knowledge** to students will decide the success. Investments in tech-driven education will convert students into **competent, compassionate, and transformative future leaders**.

#### **What are the challenges before India's education system?**

**UNESCO data** shows that **one out of four children aged five** has never had any form of **pre-primary education**. This represents 35 million out of 137 million five-year-old children worldwide.

The pandemic further exacerbated challenges to education. It has **widened the learning gaps** and led to **generational learning loss**.

Data shows that children with disabilities, from migrant families, those living in remote areas, from marginalised communities, and girls in particular are impacted the most.

### 31. Building Institutions of Eminence: It requires more than infrastructure

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Building Institutions of Eminence: It requires more than infrastructure**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **12th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance-** Higher education related issues

**News-** The article explains the issues related to Institute of Eminence Scheme of Indian government

#### **What are the issues related to the higher education system in India?**

Most of the higher education institutions in India have remained teaching institutions. They are imparting **knowledge**. They are not **creating new knowledge**. They are **followers, not leaders** at the global level.

The approach has always been to invest in building more classrooms, buying more furniture, and making bigger campuses. The **funding for research** has always been meagre.

The **regulations for ranking and rating** have yielded some results in focusing on academic outcomes. Despite these efforts, India has not achieved the goal of being a **global destination for quality higher education**.

#### **What are the different UGC regulations for the Institute of Eminence scheme?**

The **UGC (Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities) Regulation 2017** has been crafted with the express intent to develop world-class universities. This was further amended in 2021 to permit the setting up of off-shore and off-campus centres by these institutions.

The **UGC (Government Institutions declared as Institutions of Eminence) Guidelines 2017** were issued to provide funding support to the selected government institutions. The idea behind the regulation is to develop both public and private institutions equally.

#### **What is the way forward for successful implementation of the IoE scheme?**

Most of the ranking systems give close to 50% weightage to the **research productivity**. The IoE scheme should have been combined with the other crucial initiative of the **National Research Foundation**. The IoE scheme will not be successful without **investments in research**.

The IITs are still the only bet for the country to produce **global-best institutions**. A concerted focus on these institutions combined with greater autonomy would help in placing them in the top 100 ranks in the world.

There are private universities that aim to provide **liberal arts and wholesome education**. These have the chance of providing the best education globally and becoming widely known.

Three factors — **size, age and funding** — would determine the global best universities. **Regulatory processes** are impeding **institutional autonomy**. There is a need for a **liberal regulatory regime**.

The real solution lies in having **inspired faculty and students**. Inspiration doesn't come merely from better facilities or better terms of appointment or better training. Inspiration has to come from **academic leadership**.

The creation of new knowledge needs **critical thinking, problem-solving, innovative outlook of the faculty and collaborative research**.

32. [China renaming places: Beijing's posture on Arunachal Pradesh borders on intimidation](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**“Build The Answer – Ladakh or Arunachal, India’s counter to China’s border tactics must be via capability enhancement”** published in **The Times of India** on **12th April 2023**.

**“Express View: Beijing’s posture on Arunachal Pradesh borders on intimidation”** published in the **Indian Express** on **12th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About China renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh.

**News:** Recently, China renamed some places in Arunachal Pradesh.

About China renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh

**Read here:** [China announces ‘renaming’ of 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh, including one close to Itanagar](#)

What are the factors behind China renaming places?

**China does not want to solve the border dispute:** China has little interest in resolving the border tussle with India as it enjoys considerable natural military advantages along the LAC. For example, since the 2020 Galwan clashes China build fresh construction of roads, bridges and helipads on the Chinese side.

Instead, China wants India to normalise relations and compartmentalise the border dispute. This was further reinforced

**China wants to have leverage over India:** As China prepares for an intensification of the strategic competition with the US and the Quad, it wants to have leverage on the border dispute with India. Thus, India has will be in a position to rapidly reduce the border infra gap to prevent further Chinese salami slicing tactics.

**Read here:** [Invented names: On India’s response to China’s fresh attempt to lay claim over parts of Arunachal Pradesh](#)

About Chinese cartographic deceptions and China’s historical claim over Arunachal Pradesh

**Read here:** [India must be alert to China’s cartographic deception in Arunachal Pradesh](#)

What India should do as a reaction to China renaming places?

**Faster implementation of Vibrant Villages Programme:** The scheme is a well-intentioned attempt at preventing out-migration from remote border villages to make them natural defences. But its success depends on speed and quality of implementation.

**Work on a multidimensional approach:** Arunachal assumes salience for China’s Tibet question. So, India must start preparing a multidimensional approach for future tussles over the declaration of the next Dalai Lama.

**Do not take China for granted:** India should know that nothing can be taken for granted in an atmosphere on the Line of Actual Control. So, India has to act with the aim of building deterrence even while making serious attempts to find peace with China.



33. [Building safeguards – Misuse of detention power renders need to stick to procedure paramount](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Building safeguards – Misuse of detention power renders need to stick to procedure paramount**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation..

**Relevance:** About preventive detention cases.

**News:** Recently, the Supreme Court said that preventive detention laws are a colonial legacy and confer arbitrary powers on the state. This once again mentioned the threats to personal liberty posed by such laws.

What is Preventive Detention?

**Read more:** [Preventive Detention](#)

About preventive detention cases in India

Across the country, the tendency to detain suspects for a year to prevent them from obtaining bail is a pervasive phenomenon. This is leading to widespread misuse of preventive detention provisions.

Tamil Nadu government topped the country (2011-21) in preventive detentions. This is because its ‘Goondas Act’ covers offenders who range from bootleggers, slum grabbers, forest offenders to video pirates, sex offenders and cyber-criminals.

What are the observations of the court on preventive detention cases?

Both the apex court and High Courts have observed **a)** executives’ failure to adhere to procedural safeguards while dealing with the rights of detainees, **b)** detention orders are quashed by courts only after several months of detainment. In some cases, the orders are quashed after the full detention period.

**Read more:** [Preventable abuse: SC calls out wrongful use of preventive detention. Such arrests must be made only in rare cases](#)

What are the various reasons behind the court setting aside preventive detention cases?

Most detentions are ultimately set aside. The most common reason for setting aside detention is that there is an unexplained delay in the disposal of representations.

The other reasons are **a)** failure to provide proper grounds for detention, **b)** delay in furnishing them, **c)** sometimes giving illegible copies of documents and **d)** invocation of preventive detention laws for trivial reasons from the government.

What should be done to limit preventive detention?

-The court said that “every procedural rigidity, must be followed in entirety by the Government in cases of preventive detention, and every lapse in procedure must give rise to a benefit to the case of the detenu”.

-Though preventive detention is allowed by the Constitution, the government should understand that curbing crime needs efficient policing and speedy trials, and not unfettered power and discretion.

### 34. [The role of Parliamentary Committees](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The role of Parliamentary Committees**” published in **The Hindu** on **13<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Indian Polity

**Relevance:** About Parliamentary Committees

**News:** The article explains the role of Parliamentary Committees.

**Why are Parliamentary Committees constituted?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What are the recent concerns with Parliamentary Committees?**

These days a few bills are referred to Parliamentary Committees. **For instance**, only 14 Bills have been referred to Parliamentary Committees in the 17th session of Lok Sabha.

**As per data from PRS**, 25% of the Bills introduced were referred to committees in the 16th Lok Sabha, as compared to 71% and 60% in the 15th and 14th Lok Sabha respectively.

This represents a declining trend of national legislation being subjected to expert scrutiny.

**How has the Parliamentary Committee evolved with time?**

**A structured committee system was only established in 1993.** However, individual committees were formed for various reasons as far back as independence.

**For instance, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Citizenship Clause** was formed to discuss the nature and scope of Indian citizenship.

The Northeast Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee (July 28, 1947) and the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (Other than Assam) Sub-Committee (August 18, 1947) were formed concerning the North-Eastern region.

Hence, committees have been doing monumental work since the independence of India.

Today, both the **Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha have their own Standing (permanent) Committees and Ad Hoc (need-based) Committees.** There are also Joint Committees with representation from both Houses.

**What are the roles performed by the Parliamentary Committees?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**The committee reports are not binding on the government.** The government is required to table an ‘**Action Taken**’ report for the House to judge the progress made on the suggestions of the committee.

**The Business Advisory Committee** prepares the entire schedule of both Houses when Parliament is in session. **Papers laid on the table of the House** are also prepared by committees. Committees also go into issues that are crucial from a nation-building standpoint.

**For instance**, the Public Accounts Committee highlighted several concerns with the shipyards in a 2015 report which were not discussed in the Lok Sabha.

**How has been the performance of Parliamentary Committees in recent years?**

The most important work done by a committee in recent years is on the **Digital Data Protection Bill**.

Following the [Puttaswamy judgment](#), the [Justice Srikrishna Committee](#) was formed and tasked with preparing a data protection framework for India.

The committee presented a report in 2018. On the basis of this report, the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 was tabled in the Lok Sabha.

Other laws such as the **Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, the Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, etc.** have also been referred to Parliamentary Committees.

### What is the way ahead?

**In the U.S.**, committees play a crucial role and Bills are referred to them post introduction for scrutiny. It allows changes to be made and the modified Bill to go for voting.

Therefore, **the Parliament could consider a compulsory referral**, for the Bills to the appropriate committees. It is also essential to institutionalize such procedures and not allow political considerations to hasten law-making.

### 35. [India must board the Online Dispute Resolution bus](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article **“India must board the Online Dispute Resolution bus”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **13th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Judiciary

**Relevance-** Alternate dispute resolution mechanisms

**News-** At the Delhi Arbitration Weekend in February 2023, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju emphasised the need for institutional arbitration to enhance the ease of doing business.

#### **What are the issues with the dispute resolution process in India?**

India has shown tremendous improvement in the **World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business report**. It has risen from the 142nd rank among 190 countries in 2014 to 63rd in 2019.

However, India is ranked 163rd, in **‘Enforcing Contracts’**, which is a marginal improvement from the 186th rank in 2015. It takes almost four years and 31% of the cost of the claim to enforce a contract in India. In contrast, it takes just over two years and costs 22% of the claim value in Brazil.

#### **Why has India acquired the reputation of being arbitration-unfriendly?**

**Srikrishna Committee** – There is a lack of preference for **institutional arbitration over ad hoc arbitration. Frequent interference from the judiciary**, from the appointment of arbitrators to the enforcement of awards, has an impact on the process.

There is also the setting aside of arbitral awards on **grounds of ‘public policy’**.

The **amendments of 2015 and 2019** and a few recent judicial decisions have put India on the right path. The **scope for using ‘public policy’** as a ground for setting aside awards has been narrowed.

Yet, India is not a **preferred arbitration destination**, even for disputes between Indian businesses. Many still seek arbitration abroad, even when the dispute is with another Indian entity.

Singapore, which opened its **International Arbitration Centre** in the 1990s has since emerged as a **global arbitration hub** and is **ranked first in terms of ‘Enforcing Contracts’**. Indian companies are among its top users.

#### **What is the potential of ODR in India?**

India can use its **strengths in technology** and emerge a **leader in ODR**. Universal dissemination of online technology during the COVID-19 pandemic has made it possible.

ODR involves more than just **audio/video conferencing**. It encompasses the **integration of tools such as multi-channel communication, case management systems, automated case flows, digital signatures and stamping**.

There is even the **application of advanced technologies** such as blockchain, natural language processing, artificial intelligence, and machine learning.

Private platforms in India are already resolving lakhs of disputes through ODR. Many corporations have migrated to ODR to resolve small-value disputes.

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The Reserve Bank of India, the National Payments Corporation of India, and the Open Network for Digital Commerce and a few other institutions have incorporated **ODR mechanisms** into several of their initiatives. The need now is to disseminate these on a mass scale.

### **What is the way forward to increase the use of ODR in India?**

There is a need to **incentivise the use of ODR** by way of **legislative measures**. ODR can be set up as a **default dispute resolution tool** for disputes arising out of online transactions.

**Fast-tracking enforcement of ODR outcomes** and **reducing stamp duty** and court fees is required.

There is a need to solve **infrastructural challenges and curb the digital divide**. Existing setups such as Aadhaar kendras can be optimised to also function as ODR kiosks.

Each court can have an **ODR cell** along with **supplemental technical and administrative support**. A **dedicated fund** must be set up for furthering ODR.

Government departments should explore ODR as a **grievance redress mechanism**. It will not increase trust in the process and will ensure that citizens have access to a **convenient and cost-effective** means of resolving disputes with the government

### 36. Bhu-Aadhaar or ULPIN will digitise land records for efficient land usage — but incrementally

**Source-** The post is based on the article **“Bhu-Aadhaar or ULPIN will digitise land records for efficient land usage — but incrementally”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **13th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Government policies and interventions

**Relevance-** Issues related to land

**News-** In March, there was a national conference on Bhu-Aadhaar.

### **What are issues related to the pendency of cases, related to land records?**

As per **“Access to Justice Survey” by Daksh**, the GDP loss to the country’s economy is about 1.3% due to projects being stalled over litigation involving land disputes.

**66% of all civil suits** in India are related to land or property disputes, and the **average pendency** of a land acquisition dispute is **20 years**.

But there are variations from court to court and the numbers are just based on perception surveys.

According to the **NIPFP Working Paper** from August 2021 such litigation constitutes the majority of a court’s workload. But it has not been sufficiently proved that most of it is rooted in **land-titling issues**.

**17% of all disputes** at the Delhi High Court are related to **immovable property**. In these cases, the largest proportion of litigation is between private parties. The Union government is the petitioner in 2% of such litigation but is the respondent in more than 18% of cases.

**Tenancy disputes** are the most common type of litigation, closely followed by **land acquisition related matters**. Disputes related to property records are 13.6% of **immovable property litigation**.

### **What is the Digital India Land Record Modernization Program?**

It integrates **the computerization of land records, strengthening of revenue administration, and updating of land records**.

Once this has been done, every plot/parcel of land can get the **14-digit alpha-numeric ULPIN (Unique Land Parcel Identification Number) or Bhu-Aadhaar**.

### **What are issues related to modernisation of land records?**

Digitisation of cadastral records is easy. But there are issues related to **consistency and reliability** of these maps. Cadastral maps will typically not have **latitude/longitude data**.

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There may be **elevation and projection problems**.

Land is a state subject and land rights are a **complex bundle of rights**. Unlocking this unproductive asset has **many layers**.

**What is the way forward for modernisation of land records?**

Modernisation of land records in absence of other changes such as **multiplicity of laws on land**, should not be overstated.

ULPIN is about **incremental improvements**. There are parts where land titles and records are in a mess. Cleaning them up is a huge task.

But there are parts where **titles and records** are clean. Those can readily have their ULPIN.

### 37. Close trade ties with France and Italy will promote Indian exports

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Close trade ties with France and Italy will promote Indian exports**” published in the **Livemint** on **13th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About India’s ties with Italy and France.

**News:** The Union minister of commerce and industry is on a visit to Italy and France.

About India’s trade relations with Italy and France

Bilateral merchandise trade between India and Italy was \$13.23 billion in 2021-22, while the India-France bilateral trade in goods (excluding military equipment) was at \$12.42 billion.

**Top exports from India to Italy:** Iron and steel, products made of these, aluminium and its products, petroleum products and cotton ready-made garments.

**Top exports from India to France:** Petroleum products, electric machinery and equipment, drug formulations, cotton ready-made garments (including accessories) and aircraft, spacecraft and parts.

**Trade in Goods and Services:** India had a positive trade balance in goods with both these European countries. India’s services exports to the two markets include telecommunication services, IT and IT-enabled services, business services and transport services.

What are the areas of cooperation in India-Italy relations?

Over 130 Italian companies are either present in India or sourcing from here, or have partnerships with Indian companies. Well-known Italian companies that have invested in India include Fiat Auto, Heinz Italia, Piaggio, etc. They have invested in sectors such as automobiles, trading, services, machinery and food processing.

**India-Italy Strategic Partnership on Energy Transition:** It was launched in 2021. The partnership provides opportunities for further exploration of joint investments.

What are the areas of cooperation in India-France relations?

France is the 11th largest foreign investor in India. This is spread across sectors such as services, cement and gypsum products, air transport, petroleum and natural gas. Notable French companies present in India include Airbus Group, BNP Paribas, etc.

Defence ties are a core component of the Indo-French strategic partnership. India has recently allowed foreign direct investment in the defence sector.

**Read more:** [Exploring the blue in the India-France partnership](#)

What are the potential opportunities in India’s ties with Italy and France?

**a)** Italian and French companies are trying to build resilient supply chains and are looking at the large and growing Indian market, **b)** India’s export baskets can be diversified in goods and services further, **c)** All three countries can collaborate in areas like research and development, technology-based services such as health-tech and edutech, and the startup and audio-visual

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sectors, **d)** India can be a low-cost post-production hub for Italian and French audio-visual companies, **e)** India's large and growing market provides opportunities for manufacturers from Italy and France to explore and test-market their products, **f)** India's strengths in organic production and traditional medicine and practices like Yoga and Ayurveda can be showcased to Italian and French consumers.

The other areas include **1)** India's focus on organic food and millet is aligned with the EU's focus on a sustainable food system, **2)** Identification of skill requirements in the EU and joint skill development and language training programmes with France and Italy could help Indian professionals and skilled workers access the EU market.

**Read more:** [India and Italy: Friends in a turbulent world](#)

What India should be done?

The support of Italy and France is essential in concluding a broad-based, balanced, and comprehensive trade agreement with the EU. Hence, India should work closely with both Italy and France.

India-EU trade agreement will further boost trade and investment flows, encourage B2B collaborations, help diversify and secure supply chains, provide a stable operating environment for businesses, and create employment in both markets.

### [38. Will Germany Inc, Bearish On China, Turn Bullish on India?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Will Germany Inc, Bearish On China, Turn Bullish on India?**” published in **The Times of India** on **13th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About German investments in China and India.

**News:** World's biggest economies are changing their views about China. This includes the US, Japan and Germany. This is because their investments in China are facing a combination of local competition, state policies favouring local businesses and geo-political tension calls. This forced countries like Germany to critically rethink the future of German industry in China.

What is the present state of German investments in China?

A report from Rhodium Group shows that

**German giants are investing:** German Industry is heavily invested in China. After 2018, more than 80% of new European FDI has come from just the top 10 companies. This includes the three German automakers – Volkswagen, Daimler and BMW.

**Declining investments from smaller companies:** Additionally, cutting-edge technology investments from smaller companies are also declining. For example, the share of mid-sized companies from the EU has declined from 51% in the 10 years before 2018 to about 20% between 2018 and 2021.

**Low service sector investment:** There are relatively small European investments in the services sector.

**Reasons for the declining investments:** **a)** German investors' declining interest in investing in mergers and acquisitions of Chinese companies is due to high valuations and nontransparent financials, **b)** China has created regulations that benefit local companies in terms of market access.

**Read more:** [A 'Zeitenwende' in the India-Germany relationship](#)

What are the other reasons for revisiting Germany's Chinese diplomacy?

**Raw material dependency:** Excessive dependency on China for critical raw materials such as rare earth. This forced German industries to the diversification of critical raw materials, markets

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and investments. The German government has enacted the Critical Raw Materials Act, practising Foreign Direct Investment screening, and anti-coercion mechanisms.

**The factor of Tik Tok:** Germany is debating on banning Tik Tok like India. This is because of Tik Tok's potential for misuse and manipulation of personal information.

**Note:** India's banned a few Chinese apps that have the potential to gather personal data in an opaque and state-run Chinese way.

Why India is a perfect place for German investments?

India is not the default option. But India's significant potential for fast growth and expanding domestic consumer market are significant attractions of German investments.

Recently, India's physical infrastructure and laws & regulations have been changed to attract global businesses. But, local bureaucracy is still a matter of concern.

**Must read:** [India-Germany Relations in Post-Merkel Era – Explained, pointwise](#)

What India should do to attract German investments?

-India needs to make a sustained outreach to business associations in Germany that India is not a difficult place to do business.

-Both India and Germany have to work on a consensus to finalise the long pending negotiations on Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement. This will further create a robust economic relationship in a qualitatively new track.

### [39. Axe Some Acts – As long as central, state laws on preventive detention exist, their abuse is almost inevitable](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Axe Some Acts – As long as central, state laws on preventive detention exist, their abuse is almost inevitable**” published in **The Times of India** on **13th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

**Relevance:** About preventive detention laws.

**News:** Recently, two separate cases in the Supreme Court have highlighted the issues with preventive detention laws.

What is Preventive Detention?

**Must read:** [Preventive Detention](#)

At the central level, they have existed in different forms from 1950.

What are the observations of SC on preventive detention laws?

**Case 1:** The court criticised the UP government for inappropriately invoking the National Security Act in a case with political undertones.

**Case 2:** In Pramod Singla vs UoI case, the court pointed out that India's preventive detention laws are a colonial legacy with the potential to be misused.

**Read more:** [Building safeguards – Misuse of detention power renders need to stick to procedure paramount](#)

About the cases under preventive detention laws

Government data in 2021 shows that preventive detention cases increased by almost 24% to 1.1 lakh. For instance, between 2017 and 2021, annual detentions under the National Security Act ranged between 483 and 741.

States, which have their own preventive detention laws, are among the worst offenders. For example, last year, Madras HC criticised Tamil Nadu for indiscriminate use of the Goondas Act to trigger preventive detentions.

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What are the issues associated with preventive detention laws?

The root of the problem is both the intent and wording of laws. As these laws provide a broad reading of circumstances under which constitutional rights can be suppressed.

This has been the case since 1950. A recent example is the IT Rules 2021 and its amendments that can open the door to action against views deemed officially “unfavourable”.

This can be interpreted that as long as preventive detention laws are part of the statute, there is a higher chance of abuse.

**Read more:** [Preventable abuse: SC calls out wrongful use of preventive detention. Such arrests must be made only in rare cases](#)

### 40. [Skill over chance – Authorities must create an environment for healthy online games](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Close trade ties with France and Italy will promote Indian exports**” published in the **Livemint** on **13th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.

**Relevance:** About Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gambling and Regulation of Online Games Act.

**News:** Recently, the Tamil Nadu governor has given assent to a Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gambling and Regulation of Online Games Bill. This Act aims to prohibit online gambling and regulate online games in the State.

**Read more:** [Draft Rules for Online Gaming: Online games must register with self-regulatory body, say draft rules](#)

About the passage of the Bill

Earlier the Governor returned the Bill, on the grounds that the State Assembly had “no legislative competence” to enact such a law.

But by the time the House re-adopted and sent the Bill, the Centre has clarified that “betting and gambling” was in the State List (Entry 34). The government also clarified in Parliament that online gambling will come under the jurisdiction of States.

**Read more:** [Gaming and banning: On ban on online games](#)

What should be done to ensure proper enforcement of online games?

As the Centre has notified the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, there should be no confusion as far as enforcing the law is concerned. The enforcement has to be done in conjunction with the IT Act, 2000.

The proposed Tamil Nadu Online Gaming Authority should ensure a balance. Further, there should be no restrictions on online games permitted under the Act as well as monitoring of online game providers. It is in the interests of all to create an environment for healthy online games.

**Read more:** [Online gaming and its regulations in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

### 41. [Neutral, not passive: On India’s stand on the Russia-Ukraine conflict](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Neutral, not passive: On India’s stand on the Russia-Ukraine conflict**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2 – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

**Relevance:** About the Russia-Ukraine war.

**News:** Recently, Ukraine’s Deputy Foreign Minister visited India. This is the first such by a senior government official visit from Ukraine since the Russian invasion.



### How Russia-Ukraine war made India's international relations complicated?

-Russia is a historical partner of India and India also has deep defence ties. So, India has no easy, immediate alternative to Russia.

-The war has also made India's ties with its Western partners complicated as the trans-Atlantic powers, led by the United States, have launched an economic war against Russia.

-Ukraine has publicly expressed its displeasure over India's position on the war. Ukraine also criticised India's energy purchases from Russia as it involved "Ukrainian blood".

India refused to condemn Russia and maintained defence and trade ties. On the other hand, India expressed its uneasiness with the war and called for respecting the territorial integrity of all nations.

**Must read:** [The Russia-Ukraine Conflict – Explained, pointwise](#)

### What should India do?

**Utilise India's presidency:** India is the chair of the G-20 and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. So, India should do more to show global leadership and help to end the war.

**India should play a bigger role in peacemaking:** The Russia-Ukraine conflict has hurt not only Europe but also the entire world. The countries in the Global South are of the view that the hostilities should cease at the earliest. For example, both China and Brazil have hinted at playing a bigger role in brokering peace. So India should also join in the peace process.

**India should uphold international laws and sovereignty:** India's strategic neutrality means, it should **a)** empathise more vocally with the victim, **b)** raise the voice and interests of the Global South, and **c)** call for upholding international laws and sovereignty of all states. So, India should push for a pragmatic and permanent solution to the conflict.

**Read more:** [India-Russia Trade Relationship Post Russia-Ukraine Crisis – Explained, pointwise](#)

### 42. [State Your Case, Lordship – Judge recusals for vague reasons are increasing. CJI should lead the process for procedure](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**State Your Case, Lordship – Judge recusals for vague reasons are increasing. CJI should lead the process for procedure**" published in **The Times of India** on **14th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the recusal system.

**News:** Recently, the fourth judge has recused himself from hearing the Maharashtra-Karnataka border tussle on Belagavi. The judge reportedly recused himself since Karnataka is his home state. This highlights the urgent need for the Supreme Court to reform the recusal system.

**Note:** *The three other judges who earlier recused themselves from this particular case were from Karnataka too.*

### What is the recusal system?

Recusal is the removal of oneself as a judge or policymaker in a particular matter. Ordinarily, judges recuse over conflict of interest.

However, **a)** India has no laid down procedure for judges to stand down from cases, **b)** often judges don't give reasons for recusal.

Generally, recusal is advised if the presence of a judge impedes the independence of the bench. However, when recusal is sought without substantial reason, it raises as much doubt. On the other hand, justifying non-recusal and allowing opaqueness about recusal are equally damaging to the trust reposed in the courts, especially since these are constitutional courts.

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**Must read:** [Explained: How judges recuse from cases, and why](#)

### **What should be done to ensure a proper recusal system?**

**Define a protocol:** Judges have argued that it is desirable to specify reasons for recusal to meet constitutional norms of transparency. Hence, a protocol should be defined for proper recusal.

**Chief Justice should step in:** CJI should lead the process for the recusal procedure, or else they will create more suspicion.

**Read more:** [Unnecessary Mystery: Judges recusing from cases without specifying reasons hurts the entire judiciary. SC must frame rules](#)

### 43. [Taiwan matters more than we'd like to tell ourselves](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Taiwan matters more than we'd like to tell ourselves**” published in **Mint** on **14<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 2 – International Relations**

**Relevance:** **About Taiwan and China conflict**

**News:** The article discusses the ongoing conflict between China and Taiwan and its probable impact.

### **What are ongoing concerns between China and Taiwan?**

**Taiwan is home to the world's largest semiconductor company** and there are threats of attack increasing from China. For this reason, the company planned to set up a new plant in the US. However, the plan failed and if China attacks Taiwan, **there may be concerns that China will enjoy dominant control of chip production.**

Further, even the French President has insisted European countries not to get involved in China-Taiwan conflict.

On the other hand, **China has increased its military exercise near Taiwan and sent fighter jets repeatedly into the Taiwan airspace.**

China's military strength is far more superior than Taiwan's. Due to which, Taiwan's President is looking for the help from the US but its leader of opposition is supporting China.

Moreover, China is strengthening its relations with Russia and developing debt trap policies for other countries.

China also made a commitment to manage Hong Kong as a liberal, semi-autonomous financial hub, but instead, it is imposing media censorship and imprisoning people.

**Must Read:** [What game theory tells us about China-Taiwan face-off](#)

### **What lies ahead?**

If China attacks Taiwan, then it is unlikely that Taiwan will be able to defend itself for a long period of time, as the Ukraine did.

Moreover, the opposition party in Taiwan is expected to win the general election next year, which supports China. **This will change the situation of Taiwan like that of Hong Kong.**

The concern here lies in the fact that **Taiwan is the epicentre of global semiconductor production, with a 90% share of very advanced semiconductors.** Hence, there are worries over it, if any such attacks happen in the future.

44. [Explained | The rules for recognition as national and State party](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “[Explained | The rules for recognition as national and State party](#)” published in **The Hindu** on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Indian Polity

**Relevance:** Criteria for recognition as a national and state party

**News:** The Election Commission has recognised the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as a national party, while revoking that status of the All-India Trinamool Congress, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI).

**How does a party get recognised as a national party?**

The Election Commission reviews the poll performance of recognised parties after every State Assembly election or general election to the Lok Sabha.

The rules for recognition as a national party are specified by the Commission in para 6B of the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968**.

The Symbols Order of 1968 was amended in 2016 to give parties one additional “**pass over**”.

As per the amendment, if a national or State party fails to fulfil the eligibility criteria in the next general elections or the assembly election after the election in which it received recognition, it will continue to be recognised as a national or State party.

However, whether it will continue to be recognised after any subsequent election, would again have to be determined by the eligibility criteria.

**What are the criteria to be recognized as a national party?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**How was AAP recognized as a national party?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**Why did Trinamool, NCP and CPI lose its national party status?**

**Trinamool Congress:** It gained national party status in 2016 with the help of “pass over” amendment to the Symbols Act.

However, the party did not remain a state party in the required four States. It lost its status in Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, while continuing to hold recognition in West Bengal, Tripura, and Meghalaya.

**NCP:** It lost its recognition in three States (Goa, Manipur, and Meghalaya) where it did not secure enough assembly votes between 2017 and 2018. It is currently a state party in only two States, Maharashtra and Nagaland.

**CPI:** In Assembly elections and one Lok Sabha election between 2016 and 2019, the party could only retain State recognition in three States, i.e., Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Manipur but lost it in Odisha and West Bengal.

**What are the criteria to be recognised as a state party?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What are the benefits of recognition as National and State parties?**

A recognised political party enjoys privileges like a reserved party symbol, free broadcast time on State-run television and radio, consultation in the setting of election dates, and giving input in setting electoral rules and regulations.

However, **candidates of unrecognized party** are allotted election symbols by the Returning Officers of the concerned constituencies after the last date for withdrawal of candidature and as per availability.

Thus, an **unrecognized party cannot use a single poll symbol across the country**.

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### 45. [The Misconception About Bail-Jail](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The Misconception About Bail-Jail**” published in **The Times of India** on **15<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance – Criminal Justice System

**Relevance:** About Undertrials prisoners in India

**News:** The article explains the situation of undertrial prisoners in India.

**What are the findings of the data on undertrial prisoners?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What are the reasons behind the large number of undertrial prisoners?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What steps were taken by the court regarding undertrial prisoners?**

The court in **Hussainara Khatoun vs Bihar, 1979** case interpreted Article 21 and **held that speedy trial is the fundamental right of every citizen.**

Following this judgment, **court guidelines exist on release of different categories of undertrials:** **1)** Those under civil imprisonment, **2)** Those in custody for over 15 days for offences with a maximum sentence less than 7 years, **3) Senior citizens** in custody over 3 months for offences where the maximum sentence is less than 10 years, **4)** Those in jail for over 6 months under **IPC Sections 304** (culpable homicide) **or 307** (attempt to murder). **5) Relatives in jail** for over a year on offences under IPC Section 304B (dowry), **6)** Release on personal bond with or without sureties or bail is appropriate under Section 436A CrPC, provided that the penalty is not the death penalty and detention has lasted for more than half the maximum term.

**What are the concerns with these guidelines?**

There are **exceptions to it. For example, for point 4,** Bail principles won't apply to offences under NDPS, POCSO, PCA, PMLA, anti-terror laws and in CBI/ ED investigations.

Moreover, **for point 5,** there is always a risk in granting bail because investigation, evidence, witnesses can be tampered, or the accused may flee.

**What has been the stand of SC regarding bail?**

SC focuses on granting bail for most of the cases **and it has granted bail to even those accused of murder in Asim Kumar Haranath Bhattacharya vs NIA (2021).** However, the problem lies with the lower courts.

SC recently in **Satender Kumar Antil vs CBI, 2022** observed that the criminal justice system may not necessarily punish a criminal swiftly, or at all but trial courts think denial of bail is punishment.

SC recently also stayed a high court order that directed a trial court judge to justify bail in a particular case. SC said such orders could undermine independence of district judiciary considering bail.

**What can be the way ahead?**

Since, **HC is not subordinate to SC, SC has no power of its supervision. SC has only appellate powers.**

Therefore, the issue of bail must be considered by HCs as a priority because a case takes years to be resolved which increases the number of undertrials and deprives them of their rights.

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### 46. [Mughals have not been erased from NCERT textbooks](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Mughals have not been erased from NCERT textbooks**” published in **The Indian Express** on **15th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** Curriculum and syllabus related issues

**News-** The **recent controversy** over the National Council of Educational Research and Training reducing **the content on Mughal history** in the school curriculum has sparked a heated debate in the country.

#### **What are the justifications in support of the NCERT move?**

Mughal history is **just one glorious 200-year part** of just one period of Indian history.

Apart from that, there are **2,000 years remaining**. Other great medieval powers like the Marathas and Southern dynasties **continue to be underrepresented**.

The **NCERT removed overlapping material** from grades 6 to 12 to reduce the burden on students.

It **revolves around the significant policies** that redefined the landscape and mindset of the people. Akbar’s policies feature in this theme in the rationalized syllabus as well.

Mughals have been overrepresented in our history books and were an **obvious area for right-sizing**.

#### **What is the way forward?**

In the age of Wikipedia, we need to **expose our children to the broad themes** and grand sweep of history and create an **understanding of their origins**. Children should be equipped with the tools and curiosity to read and research further as they grow.

History teaching should be more engaging and informative. It should do **justice to the breadth and depth of our heritage**.

### 47. [A reminder about unfettered constitutional posts](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**A reminder about unfettered constitutional posts**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **15th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Appointment to various Constitutional Posts

**Relevance**– Independence of institutions

**News**– Two recent comments of the Supreme Court of India are important. In a hearing of the ‘Sena versus Sena’ case, the Court expressed its “serious concern” over the active role being played by Governors in State politics.

The Court divested the executive of its sole discretion in appointing the CEC and ECs by forming a committee to suggest suitable names to man these constitutional posts.

#### **Why is there a need for independent institutions?**

A democracy requires a **system of checks and balances**. It is necessary to prevent the **arbitrary use of power** by the elected government of the day.

India’s democracy provides for **various constitutional authorities** such as the Public Service Commission, the CAG, the ECI, the Finance Commission, and the National Commissions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Backward Classes.

The Constituent Assembly of India had recognized the need for such **independent institutions** to **regulate sectors of national importance** without any executive interference.

It is necessary that such constitutional bodies are provided with **complete independence** to enable them to function **without fear or favor and in the larger interests of the nation**.

**What are the provisions in the constitution that provide for the appointment of persons heading the independent institutions?**

The Constitution uses simple words such as **'shall be appointed by the President'** in the appointment of the Prime Minister (Article 75), the Attorney- General for India (Article 76), the Chairman and other members of the Finance Commission (Article 280), the Chairman and other members of the Public Service Commission (Article 316).

However, the words **'shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal'** are used while authorizing the President for appointment of the judges of Supreme Court and the High Court, the CAG and for appointment of the Governor

**Similar words** have been used in Articles 338, 338A and 338B authorizing the President for appointing Chairman and members of the National Commissions for SCs, STs and BCs. However, as per the original Article, **'there shall be a Special Officer for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to be appointed by the President.'**

**How do constituent assembly debates show that it assigns a special status to CAG, Governor and judges of higher courts in appointment related matters?**

In the draft Constitution, the article for appointment of the CAG (Article 124) had provided that **'There shall be an Auditor General who shall be appointed by the President.'**

An amendment proposed in the Constituent Assembly To this Article for **inserting the words 'by warrant under his hand and seal.'**

The Constituent Assembly discussed that the Auditor -General should be always **independent of either the legislature or the executive.** He is the **watchdog of our finances.**

The same amendment for the Article related to **appointment of Governor in Article 131** of the draft Constitution was moved.

The Constituent Assembly discussed that the President should be **free from the influence of the Legislature.**

Both amendments were passed.

**What is the way forward for appointment of persons heading the independent institutions?**

The Constitution affixes the phrase **"by warrant under his hand and seal"** only for appointment to positions like Judges, the CAG and the Governors. It assigns a **special status** to distinguish them from other constitutional positions.

Constitutional authorities such as the Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Court and the CAG of India is to be kept **free from political or executive pressure.**

Appointments of judges and the ECs have been made **free from the influence of the executive.** But there is a need to set up a **well- defined criteria and procedures** for the appointment of the CAG of India.

The process of selecting a person to be appointed as the CAG of India should begin by **appointing a committee** consisting of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Chief Justice of India, and the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee to shortlist names for appointment of CAG of India.

**A panel of three names** should be forwarded to the President for him to make the **final selection** as in Article 148 of the Constitution of India.

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### 48. [Economic distress in Sri Lanka: Life & Debt – India-France-Japan initiative crucial for Colombo](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Lanka: Life & Debt – India-France-Japan initiative crucial for Colombo**” published in **The Times of India** on **15th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About economic distress in Sri Lanka.

**News:** Recently, Sri Lanka received a **\$2. 9 billion package from IMF**. Following that, India, Japan and France have set up a common platform for talks among Sri Lanka’s creditors to work out ways to restructure the country’s external debt.

#### **About the present state of economic distress in Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka’s average inflation in 2023 is projected to be 28. 5% even as the economy is expected to shrink 3.1%. But, Sri Lanka’s current account deficit in 2023 is projected to be 1. 6% of GDP, a manageable level.

The greatest distress of the Sri Lankan economy at present is its aggregate external debt, which is 74% of its GDP. Sri Lanka is having arrears to almost all of its external creditors. The country has also obtained financing assurances from all major creditors.

**Note:** *China is the major creditor of Sri Lanka.*

#### **What led to the economic distress in Sri Lanka?**

**Read here:** [Causes Behind Sri Lanka crisis](#)

#### **What are the objectives of the economic restructuring package for Sri Lanka?**

The key aim of Lanka’s economic restructuring package is to lower its annual debt service in foreign exchange from the current 9% of GDP to 4. 5% by 2027. This will require the country to lower its public debt from the current level of 122% of GDP.

**Read more:** [In Sri Lankan crisis, a window of economic opportunity](#)

### 49. [Diplomacy, with a change in terms of reference](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article “**Diplomacy, with a change in terms of reference**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **17th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**News-** Iran, Saudi Arabia, and China announced that an agreement has been reached between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

#### **What are the important points about the agreement?**

It covers a **resumption of diplomatic relations** between them and a **re-opening of their embassies and missions** within a period not exceeding two months.

**Read More –** [Saudi-Iranian normalisation and implications for India – Explained, pointwise](#)

The agreement affirmed their **respect for the sovereignty of states, and non-interference in the internal affairs of states**.

#### **What are the implications of increasing closeness between Saudi Arabia and Iran?**

China brought Saudi Arabia together with Iran when Israel was thinking that the United States would bring it together with Saudi Arabia.

There is a **substantial change in the strategic situation** in the Middle East. The Saudis are now **balancing their security** by playing off the U.S. against China.’

**USA’s influence and credibility** in the region has diminished. A new type of **international regional alignment** is taking place. It has **empowered** and has given both Russia and China **newfound influence and status**.

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### **What are the background events that led to thaw in ties between Saudi and Iran?**

**Bilateral efforts** have been underway since early 2016 to ease tensions that had developed specifically between Tehran, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. The Emir of Kuwait and the Sultan of Oman initiated steps that were responded to by Iran.

Talks were also held in Baghdad and during **Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to China** in February.

All were worried about the **attacks on shipping and energy facilities** in Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates and the **longer term implications of the regional conflicts** that were underway.

During China's President Xi Jinping visit to Saudi Arabia in December 2022, he attended the first **China-Arab States Summit and the China-GCC Summit**.

### **What were the important developments during the Chinese President's visit to Saudi Arabia?**

Jinping's speech laid stress on **five priority areas: energy cooperation; finance and investment cooperation, innovation, science and technology, aerospace cooperation and Chinese language and cultural cooperation**.

Following are some of the initiatives launched  
Global Security Initiative

#### **A comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement**

The statement stressed the importance of **deepening joint cooperation with regard to the BRI** and on attracting Chinese expertise in Saudi megaprojects.

The two sides signed **'a harmonising plan' between the KSA's Vision 2030 and the BRI**.

### **What is the importance of west Asia for India and Its policy towards this region?**

Apart from **historical linkages**, the region is in India's **proximate neighbourhood** and within its **security parameters**. It is the principal **source of hydrocarbon imports, and investments**. It is also an **important destination for manpower exports** apart from being a **major trading partner** including projects.

India's reaction to this development has been **restrained**. The official policy has focused on bilateral relations and **avoidance of involvement in bilateral and regional disputes**.

India has consciously **refrained from participation in alternate security architectures**. The region should not be **viewed in competition with China**. India should not consider itself a **surrogate for western powers** in power games.

### 50. [Shaking Up The Rule Of Lawyers – Bar Council's nod to entry of foreign law firms, even if the scope is restricted, will likely drain large Indian law firms of both talent & clients](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Shaking Up The Rule Of Lawyers – Bar Council's nod to entry of foreign law firms, even if the scope is restricted, will likely drain large Indian law firms of both talent & clients"** published in **The Times of India** on **17th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About BCI's decision to permit foreign law firms.

**News:** The Bar Council of India (BCI) recently permitted foreign lawyers and law firms to practice in India.

#### **About the BCI decision to permit foreign law firms**

**Read here: [Foreign lawyers, firms can operate in India: BCI](#)**



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### What are the advantages of BCI's decision to permit foreign law firms?

**Not impact majority of Indian lawyers:** The regulations do not adversely affect more than 99% of the 20 lakh strong Indian lawyer population.

**Permitted Limited Liability:** Indian law firms (ILFs) are not allowed to be Limited Liability Partnerships. Instead, they can only do partnership firms with unlimited liability. This was a major roadblock for foreign law firms to set up offices in India. But the new regulations have permitted FLFs to be constituted as LLPs.

**Enlarge FLFs in India:** MNCs always prefer to use the same law firms worldwide. Hence, MNC clients in India will migrate as soon as such FLFs set up in India. This will compel FLFs to rethink having a presence in India.

Further, Fees charged by ILFs are likely to come down.

### What are the challenges in BCI's decision to permit foreign law firms?

**Increase surrogacy of FLFs:** Some FLFs that had set up offices in India were compelled to exit, following adverse court judgments. Some of them have established surrogate models in India. Such a surrogate firm would be manned only by Indian lawyers and satisfy the criteria for being classified as an Indian firm. Under the new BCI regulations, this surrogacy may proliferate.

**Brain drain from ILFs:** In most ILFs, only about 50-plus attorneys constitute the A-team or the super performers, who are the most precious asset of the firm. FLFs will target these A-teams, with substantial increase in tax-efficient remuneration; opportunities to move to foreign offices; participation in the international profit pool, etc.

**Impact ILFs:** Corporate India will be willing to pay high fees if the service is excellent. Many such corporates will therefore move to foreign firms to avail a better quality of service. Many large Indian transactional law firms are likely to lose both their star players and their star clients.

**Read more:** [Global law, local practice – BCI's move recognises India's corporate globalisation](#)

### 51. Reforming multilateral lenders is an uphill task

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Reforming multilateral lenders is an uphill task”** published in the **Livemint** on **17th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About reforming MDGs (multilateral development banks).

**News:** The G20 expert group, co-chaired by N.K. Singh and Larry Summers, are on the view of reforming multilateral development banks (MDBs), such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. But the group said that reforming MDBs would need a closer look at both geopolitics and the domestic political dynamics of the world's leading nations.

#### **About the G20 expert group on strengthening multilateral development banks(MDBs)**

A nine-member G20 expert group, under the aegis of India's Presidency, has been set up to suggest ways to strengthen multilateral development banks (MDBs) like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

**Read here:** [G20 expert group on strengthening multilateral development banks\(MDBs\)](#)

#### **What are the challenges in reforming MDBs?**

– The indebtedness of poor countries escalated during the pandemic and became unmanageable after the Russia-Ukraine war. For example, Zambia defaulted on its external debt.

– **Chinese challenge:** China's negotiating strategy and its role as a significant creditor country. According to 2020 data, the Chinese state and its subsidiaries have lent over \$1.5 trillion—over

5% of global GDP—to about 150 nations worldwide. China's bargaining tactics on the restructuring of loans have all the hallmarks of the sovereign commercial debt crisis of the 1980s. With sovereign debt defaults now a reality, there were demands for China to take hair-cuts and provide some concessions to indebted countries. But China demands MDBs to take hair-cuts. -The nature of partisan and combative domestic politics in the US. This is because any change in the MDGs will require US Congress approval.

### **Why Chinese argument on reforming MDGs is flawed?**

- a) MDG loans are concessional in nature and are earmarked for nations in trouble with no other borrowing option. On the other hand, Chinese loans are essentially commercial, with market-linked coupons and repossession clauses.
- b) It is an unfair comparison for China to put itself on the same pedestal as MDBs.

### 52. Chinese shenanigans on Arunachal Pradesh

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“Chinese shenanigans on Arunachal Pradesh”** Published in **The Hindu** on **18th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance:** India and China bilateral relations

**News-** Recently, China renamed 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh.

### **What are other examples of renaming of places in a line territories by China?**

China also named **several under-sea features in the Indian Ocean**, using the names of Chinese musical instruments.

In 2017, China had **‘renamed’ six places that lie in Arunachal Pradesh**. It had also ‘standardised’ the names of 15 places in 2021.

In 2020, China gave names to **80 geographical features in the Paracels and Spratlys** in the South China Sea. In 1983, it had named 287 geographical features in the South China Sea. It began using the **term “Diaoyutai” for the Senkaku Islands** in the East China Sea in the 1950s, even before raking up the Senkaku issue with Japan.

### **What are the reasons behind the renaming exercise by China?**

The **Chinese modus operandi** is to lay the groundwork through fictional renaming of alien territories. It uses them as a **basis for “historical” claims**. These are then pursued using the **“three warfares” strategy — of waging propaganda, psychological and legal warfare**.

### **What are measures taken by China in recent times that can deteriorate relations with India?**

China enacted a **new Coast Guard Law** to take necessary measures, including the use of force, to **safeguard “sovereignty”**.

China also passed a **new law on the protection and exploitation** of the country's land border areas. This can convert the boundary dispute with India into a sovereignty issue.

From 2017 onwards, China launched the **construction of dual-purpose villages** in areas adjacent to the border with India, from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. These are called **Xiaokang villages**.

### **Why is China's claim on Arunachal Pradesh bogus?**

**Qing presence in Tibet** began to emerge around 1720, after Chinese intervention in the **internecine succession struggle** following the death of the Sixth Dalai Lama.

There is absolutely **no basis to the Chinese claim over Tawang** on the grounds that it is the birthplace of the Sixth Dalai Lama. China had **no locus standi** in Tibet at the time.

### **Why are the basis of India's historical claim on Arunachal Pradesh strong?**

Arunachal Pradesh is **home to various tribes**. They have historically been a part of **India's civilisational heritage**.

Most of its populace has been **historically oriented towards the Assam plains**. The tribes there were in regular contact with the **Ahom power in Assam**.

Some tribes such as the Monpas, have **professed Buddhism**. Others follow **animistic practices**. Some tribes practise a **form of Vaishnavism**.

The Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Kalika Purana, the Vishnu Purana, the Yogini Purana, and Kalidasa's Raghuvamsa have references that give a clear indication of the inclusion of these tribal tracts in the **collective consciousness and cultural moorings** of ancient India.

These sources have indications about the **boundaries of the kingdoms of Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa**. Their limits appeared to include the whole of Arunachal Pradesh.

The **Shiva Linga in Ziro, Parshuram Kund, and the temple ruins of Malinithan** show an **ancient Hindu influence** in the region. Some Mishmi tribes consider themselves to be the descendants of **King Bhishmaka**. Some Aka tribes claim their descent from **King Bhaluka**.

Archaeological finds have unearthed **silver coins and inscriptions in the Arabic script at Bhalukpong**. These are linked to a Muslim ruler of Bengal.

The architecture of **forts like Bhalukpong, Ita and Bhismaknaga** is heavily influenced by the **architectural principles of fort construction** found in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and Arthashastra.

### 53. A culture of cohesion to save young lives on campuses

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**A culture of cohesion to save young lives on campuses**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **18th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance**– Campus suicides and distress among students

**News**– The newspaper reports about young students ending their lives is disturbing.

### **What are some facts and statistics about students ending their lives on campuses of higher education institutions?**

During the 2018-23, **61 students passed away**. During 2014-21, there were **122 cases in various higher education institutions**.

Most students were from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Castes and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS). Marginalisation and deprivation are factors, but one also finds a wide spectrum of students.

### **What are the reasons for student distress at institutions of higher education?**

Campuses have become **large and impersonal spaces**. **Family support** is reducing. There are more **nuclear families** now with working parents. They are unable to provide the kind of **parenting and mentoring** that joint families provide.

**Individualism** is pervasive in society. Early signs of emotional distress go **unnoticed, unrecognized, and unaddressed**.

Generally, institutions are in **denial mode**. They expect the situation to be dealt with by the parents. Students in emotional distress are advised to spend time with their families.

In higher education institutions, there is hardly any **free and fair communication** between students, their seniors, teachers, and the administration. **Classroom interactions** are confined to academics. It adds to the stress emotionally distressed students are already under.

Teachers don't have the **time, inclination and expertise** to address any disturbing traits among their students. A highly **formalised, standardised and hierarchical structure** can never be conducive to promoting a **congenial environment**.

### **What are factors responsible for campus suicides?**

Most campus suicides are attributed to **academic pressure, family circumstances, personal reasons, different kinds of stress, financial distress, caste-based discrimination, and different forms of harassment**.

Many of the sources of distress lie **outside the purview of higher education institutions**. They have genesis in the **larger economic and societal contexts**.

### **What is the contrast between counselling support for students in the USA and India?**

Universities in the United States have **dedicated counselling centres** with a range of psychological services. They are accredited by the International Accreditation of Counseling Services.

They are manned by licensed psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical therapists, mental health workers and social workers. The **counsellor-to-student ratio** is carefully established through careful analysis.

In contrast, the **psychological counselling services** in Indian campuses are limited to providing some physical space in a corner of the institution. They have a limited number of professionally trained psychologists and psychotherapists. There are **hardly any standards**.

### **What is the way forward to overcome the stress faced by students at campuses?**

There is a need for **counselling and therapies as curative measures** for distressed students. It may be easy to strengthen and streamline.

It is critical to create an **assimilative culture of cohesion and promote respect for academic and socio-economic diversity**. Institutions must deter and curb all forms of discrimination.

There is a need to evolve a **code of campus ethics prescribing standards and protocols** of what can and cannot be discussed even in informal social settings. **Social, economic, and cultural diversity** on campuses add value. But, it should be **sensitively nurtured and carefully harnessed**.

### 54. Replacing 'western knowledge' with 'Indian knowledge' could result in intellectual disaster

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Replacing 'western knowledge' with 'Indian knowledge' could result in intellectual disaster"** published in **The Indian Express** on **18<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues associated with education

**News:** The article explains the evolution of Indian knowledge system and concerns with replacing it with the Western knowledge system.

### **How is Indian knowledge different from the western knowledge?**

The western system thinks of knowledge as **"logos"**, meaning knowledge based upon reasoning. In contrast, **Indian traditions of thought looked at knowledge as an experience, as knowing**. The two Sanskrit words vidya and gnyana, represent the basic difference between the two traditions.

**Vidya admits proof and evidence** and attempts to develop methods of bringing perception into the form of a logical statement, while **gnyana rests upon testimony and the truth of the word**.

### **How has the Indian knowledge system developed with time?**

In Indian traditions of learning, **memory had been a central interest** from the earliest times. It is described by the term **smriti**, which means remembering.

As per **the Bhagavad Gita**, weakening of smriti may lead to destruction of the intellect.

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In ancient Indian society, **special care was taken to aid and facilitate easy remembering of the text by introducing various accessible mnemonic tools.**

This helped in preserving texts through memorization with a very high standard of accuracy. The Indian idea of knowledge brought intellect closer to intuition, together with the use of memory for the reproduction of texts from the past.

**This resulted in the most favoured mode of receiving and giving education not only in medicine, chemistry, sculpture, etc. but also in philosophy, poetry, mathematics and astronomy.**

However, **the social division that** began to develop in Indian civilization more than 2,000 years ago made it difficult to produce any true “universal knowledge”.

**The access to memorisation technique was restricted by the social status of a person.**

This kind of **schooling changed after paper became available for use** in India during the 13th century. The **oral as well as written format coexisted** in an interdependent manner in the Indian system of knowledge.

Therefore, **manuscripts existed in both writings as well as in oral form** and this continued in Indian history for centuries.

After the arrival of **print technology in India**, languages were chosen for printing in India not for their literary qualities but for their convenience.

Thus, the traditions of knowledge that had oral as well as written presentation continued to remain cut off from those knowledge traditions that had only the oral form.

As a result, the divide between social classes that had easy access to letters and those who did not was widened during India’s transition from medieval to modern periods.

**What will happen if Indian knowledge system is replaced with the Western?**

It will make **Indians ignorant of the past and learners may even start negating the presence of the social divide** that existed in the Indian knowledge system.

It will **produce a generation of students who may grow up thinking that all knowledge developed in ancient India lies hidden in some manuscript archive.**

Hence, trying to take India forward to the past will make India a continent of ignorance.

### 55. Same-sex marriage: The only natural and just way forward

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**“Same-sex marriage: The only natural and just way forward”** published in the **Indian Express** on **18th April 2023.**

**“Same-sex marriage is a ‘mere urban elitist view’: Government to SC”** published in **The Hindu** on **18th April 2023**

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

**Relevance–** Issues related to same-sex marriages

**News:** The Supreme Court received petitions to allow same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act.

**About the case and Centre’s affidavit on legalising Same-sex marriages in India**

**Read here:** [Same-sex marriages can rock societal values: Centre](#)

**What are the arguments in support of the centre position against same-sex marriages?**

Government argued that if the court allows same sex marriage, it would amount to the “judicial creation of a social institution called ‘marriage’ of a different kind than contemplated in the existing law”.

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Moreover, fundamental rights like the right to choose one's sexual orientation as well as the right to privacy have already been protected under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

Hence, any further creation of rights, recognition of relationships and giving legal sanctity to such relationships can be done only by the competent legislature and not by judicial adjudication.

**Read more:** [Same-sex marriages: A matter for Parliament](#)

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

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

**What is the stand of different organizations on same sex marriage?**

The Delhi Commission For Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) has supported the petition saying that same-sex family units are "normal" and that the government should intervene in taking steps to encourage such family units.

Recently, the Indian Psychiatric Society (IPS) came in support of the same-sex family units arguing it would promote their inclusion in society. IPS stance that homosexuality is not an illness – had played a key role in the 2018 judgment that decriminalized homosexuality.

**What are the misconceptions and reality about raising children with LGBTQIA+ couple families?**

**Misconceptions:** Children growing up in families of same-sex unions will become confused about societal norms and are much more likely to become gay themselves.

**Reality: a)** The whopping majority of gay people grow up in families of heterosexual parents, and often in conservative households, **b)** Private research on children growing up with same-sex couples found no social difficulties or specific mental health problems among children, **c)** Another research found that most gay couples were more mindful and sensitive to their children's needs and were willing to walk the extra mile as parents.

**What should be done?**

Legalising same-sex marriage may pave the way for generations to come and become a big step towards reclaiming the diverse, multicultural, and inclusive civilisation of India.

**Must read:** [Legalising Same-sex marriages in India and associated challenges - Explained, pointwise](#)

56. [For Many Dollars More – Reforming multilateral lenders depends on China signing off on it. And China wants more power](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"For Many Dollars More – Reforming multilateral lenders depends on China signing off on it. And China wants more power"** published in **The Times of India** on **18th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About reforming MDGs (multilateral development banks).

**News:** The G20 expert group, co-chaired by N.K. Singh and Larry Summers, are on the view of reforming multilateral development banks (MDBs). This expert group report should be read with another report submitted last year to G20, an independent review of MDBs' capital adequacy framework.

**About the G20 expert group on strengthening multilateral development banks(MDBs) and what are MDBs?**

**Read here:** [G20 expert group on strengthening multilateral development banks\(MDBs\)](#)

**What is the need for MDBs reforms?**

There are nine major MDBs, of which the World Bank is the most prominent. Collectively, MDBs hold about \$500 billion in shareholder equity, which is used to raise more resources for concessional lending. But this available shareholder capital is not being put to optimum use. The review of the G20 expert group concluded that MDBs can raise more resources without asking shareholders to increase their capital. This can be done by **a)** leveraging the callable capital (Callable capital represents a guarantee by the shareholders to backstop the institutions in case of shocks), **b)** Leveraging the guarantees.

**What are the challenges in reforming MDBs?**

**The demand of China:** China is the second-biggest economy in the world and generally holds the third-largest voting rights in key MDBs after the US and Japan. China wants MDBs to be a part of any debt restructuring solution. China also wants more power to control MDBs like the US and Europe gained in the past.

**Read more:** [Reforming multilateral lenders is an uphill task](#)

Unless China gets what it thinks all committees on MDBs will produce good research, but little reform.

[57. Our new digital rules must ensure online child safety](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Our new digital rules must ensure online child safety” published in **Live Mint** on **19<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 2 – Issues Related to Children**

**Relevance:** **concerns associated online child abuse and measures required**

**News:** The article discusses the threats associated with the use of the internet to children and measures needed to address those.

**How are children vulnerable to the internet?**

Over the last few years and especially post-pandemic, access to the internet for children has increased for education, learning, and entertainment.

Due to which, **online sexual abuse of children has increased by 400 times.**

Therefore, the government is trying to revamp India’s **Information Technology Act, 2000** and provide safe harbour to child safety.

**Why is a safe harbour important for child safety?**

**Safe harbour ensures that users can benefit from an open, free and safe internet, and protects people from the dangers of mass censorship by intermediaries.**

**The current IT Act provides safe harbour protection to online intermediaries** whereby platforms are liable to take down user-generated content on receiving ‘actual knowledge’ of its illegality through a court or government order.

Therefore, increasing the accountability of online intermediaries is important.

However, overarching restrictions on civil rights and dilution of safe harbour can impact user safety, as seen in the case of **SESTA-FOSTA legislations of the US.**

Five years after its enactment, numerous reports came up suggesting that these laws had endangered the lives of sex workers. It made it difficult to gather evidence to investigate and prosecute traffickers.

Therefore, the IT Act should be amended in such a way that it serves the purpose.

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### What changes can be made to the IT Act 2000?

**Adopting Tech-Based Solutions:** The new IT Act must focus on expanding affirmative technology-based solutions to tackle child sexual abuse material (**CSAM**) and establish community hotlines for swift remedial measures. The Supreme Court of India also recommended these measures in the **Prajwala case of 2018**.

Moreover, **public-private partnerships** to incentivize the growth of privacy-enabling technologies must be encouraged.

**Tech companies must use cutting-edge technologies, adopt global best practices such as end-to-end encryption** and build new ways to identify and take action against perpetrators.

**Greater responsibility sharing and capacity enhancement:** The new law should focus on deploying **streamlined grievance redressal processes** that intermediaries must adopt to efficiently respond to online harm.

A process should be adopted for grading grievances **according to the degree of harm** and those related to **CSAM proliferation** should be addressed on an immediate basis.

**Intermediaries should also make their terms of service easily comprehensible** for children and create easily accessible mechanisms for them to lodge complaints.

Furthermore, improving **law enforcement authorities' capacity** to conduct efficient investigations and prompt prosecutions.

**Sensitization and collaboration:** Children should be included as equal participants in the fight against online child abuse. **For instance, the Australian government** is instituting a **Youth Advisory Council**, which will provide the administration feedback on online safety issues and measures to counter cyber-harm.

Many countries are also making efforts through their engagement of school systems to raise public awareness on the issue. **It could be helpful to adapt such practices to Indian educational systems as well.**

### 58. [India @75, Looking at 100: Accessibility is for everyone](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**India @75, Looking at 100: Accessibility is for everyone**” published in **The Indian Express** on **19<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Vulnerable Sections of the Society

**Relevance:** concerns of accessibility with the disadvantaged groups

**News:** The article discusses issues of accessibility with the disadvantaged group and measures needed to address those.

#### What is accessibility and why is it needed?

**Accessibility is a fundamental human right**, but it's often overlooked in our daily lives. Therefore, there is a need to see beyond physical differences and treat everyone with empathy and respect.

This includes learning how to interact with people with reduced mobility and understanding their needs. **For instance**, not misusing parking or sitting areas or using toilets designated for people with reduced mobility.

**There is also a need to prioritize accessibility to the needy such as** wheelchair users, pregnant women, or children, and help make public spaces more accessible for all.

When people have the freedom to choose how they want to live their lives, **they become more productive and contribute more to society and the economy.**

#### What are some of the concerns with accessibility in India?

The **proportion of elderly** (over 60 years old) people in India is expected to **increase from 8.6 per cent in 2011 to 12.5 per cent by 2030 and almost 20 per cent by 2050.**



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Currently, **due to inadequate infrastructure**, elderly individuals who expect to enjoy their lifelong savings are unable to do so. They are unable to enjoy themselves due to unexpected challenges like temporary injuries, etc.

However, as India turns 100 in 2047, it could proactively address accessibility issues.

### **How can India address the accessibility issues by 2047?**

Making India accessible by 2047 for everyone **requires collective effort**.

India should **prioritise accessibility in its infrastructure development, transport and policies**. This will provide equal opportunities for all and ensure full participation in society. India is the world's largest democracy, and **it has a unique opportunity to lead the world in making accessibility a fundamental human right and position itself to become a superpower**.

### 59. A judgement that upholds the Constitution

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“A judgement that upholds the Constitution”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **19th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Judiciary

**Relevance:** Issues related to working of the judiciary

**Context**- The Supreme Court (SC) judgement in the Media One case requires a political reading and not merely a legal one.

#### **What is the importance of the judgement?**

It is a landmark judgement on the **freedom of expression**. It endorses the citizen's right to question the state by distinguishing the government from the nation.

#### **What are recent criticisms against SC?**

It has **postponed hearings on important cases** such as electoral bonds and the dilution of Article 370. It has also upheld the draconian provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

SC has taken a stand against **constitutionally guaranteed freedoms**. It stayed the Bombay High Court order that directed the release of physically challenged activist G.N. Saibaba.

#### **How is SC going for course correction?**

In Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India, SC took away the **power of appointment of Election Commissioners** from the **sole domain of the executive**. It directed the constitution of a committee to select them.

Media **One judgment** has underlined the **institutional capacity of the court** to uphold the rights in troubled political times.

#### **How is the media one judgement different from other judgements that uphold the important constitutional principles?**

In the **Bommai case**, it holds that **federalism and secularism** are the basic features of the Constitution. However, it failed to address the real issue of dissolution of a few State governments, as elections were held in those States subsequently.

In the **Puttaswamy case**, the Supreme Court only provided details of the **idea of privacy** and related concepts at a doctrinal level. It did not go for a **direct and immediate encounter** with the executive.

On the other hand, in the Media One case, the court directly confronted the Centre.

It directed it to **renew the licence of the media house**. It considered all the **major doctrinal issues** such as the **right to fair hearing, proportionality standard and public interest claims** and issued directives to the Centre in concrete terms.

**What are the challenges faced by the judiciary across the world?**

**Populist autocracies** try to crush the judiciary with their **majoritarian impulse**.

**In Israel**, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tried to interfere with the **independence of the judiciary**.

**In Bolivia**, judges have been arbitrarily dismissed in the last few years.

**Poland** lowered the retirement age of judges. The regime sent out older judges and inducted new persons who are loyalists of the government.

The executive in India delays making judicial appointments as suggested by the collegium. There is sometimes even public criticism of the judiciary by the executive in India.

**How has the Supreme Court balanced its judgments?**

It shows the judiciary's effort to **resist majoritarian overtones**. However, it has also distanced itself from the role that the Opposition is supposed to play.

It is because the task before the court is not to **uphold the Opposition's politics**, even when it might be legitimate.

Therefore, recently, the apex court rightly dismissed a plea by Opposition parties, which alleged arbitrary use of central probe agencies against them. The grievance is genuine. But the issue needed a **political solution**, not an **adjudicatory resolution**.

This is how the court's constitutional duties vary from the Opposition's politics. It cannot pose a **political check**, which can only happen by way of **mass movements or electoral decisions**.

60. The future of India's civil society organizations

**Source-** The post is based on the article "The future of India's civil society organizations" published in "The Hindu" on 19th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Development Processes and the Development Industry

**News-** The article deals with changing landscape of civil society in India.

**What are the challenges faced by civil society in current times?**

CSOs lobbying for greater constitutional and civic freedoms are facing many challenges.

The access of funds to CSOs has been restricted by cancelling Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act clearances, revoking licenses, imposing retrospective taxes, and pressuring private companies and philanthropists to redirect funding.

Civil society is being vilified as disruptive to India's development trajectory — and therefore anti-national.

Some specific CSOs are the primary recipient of government patronage and also the principal beneficiary of Corporate Social Responsibility funds.

**What are the issues with the working of CSOs?**

Instead of reorientation of their operational methodologies, CSOs still follow outdated tactics whose overall utility is fast diminishing. For example, sanctioned protests at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, Town Hall in Bengaluru or Azad Maidan are not useful in the present scenario.

Similarly, articles, speeches at think tanks/conferences, and petitions/open letters do not shame governments into any substantive course correction.

Even lobbying legislators to raise issues is ineffective as it has become easy to hinder or ignore Parliamentary functions.

Progressive CSOs fail to blend socio-cultural values with welfare/constructive work or calls to protect constitutional values. They are unable to reshape hearts and minds, and guide mass consciousness.

Vast sections of society have been radicalized. This is a major shortcoming of progressive civil society.

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Evidence from various States suggests that local communities secure benefits from progressive CSOs, but ideologically align with the ruling government. This dichotomy has resulted in psychological fatigue among key activists.

### **What are the options for civil society?**

CSOs need some financial sustenance because of financial constraints. Without sustained support, CSOs cannot mould public discourse.

Young activists could be inducted into political parties, either within the party organisation or in an aligned body. This could create an institutionalised moral force within the parties. This would afford parties a layered systemic approach to thorny issues.

Currently, many parties consciously avoid direct exposure to difficult issues that could adversely impact them electorally. This includes communal disturbances, atrocities against Dalits and women, and advocating for Adivasi rights or civic and political freedoms.

If an aligned civil society organisation took up such issues, it would ensure that a party remains connected to genuine community problems. There is a precedent to this, when the Congress Movement complemented the Congress system.

### **What is the way forward for CSOs?**

CSOs will need to urgently collaborate with other progressive stakeholders. They will need to shed their studied aversion to each other and political parties.

We need to find structural solutions to structural problems. This is our historic responsibility. Private philanthropies and companies need to realise that they are the only lifeline for progressive CSOs today. It is infinitely easier to support organisations that work on 'soft' issues that may not invite the wrath of the powers. But inaction today will directly contribute to the extinction of civil society.

Conscientious Indians must find the courage to work together and silently devise new methods of collaboration.

### 61. A message for the planners in dealing with the Dragon

**Source-** The post is based on the article "A message for the planners in dealing with the Dragon" published in "The Hindu" on 19th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance-** India and China bilateral relationship

**News-** Recently, China remanded 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh. There was also denial of visas to some Indian media personnel who the Chinese consider to be 'unhelpful' in their reporting.

### **Why does China need to be taken seriously?**

Some experts consider China's President Xi Jinping as less of a **Sun Tzu follower**. He is close to Mao who believes in **power flowing through the barrel of a gun**.

Some experts argue that Xi Jinping should be taken seriously when he says that he is **preparing China for war**.

He has called for **working together, dare to fight, break out of dependence on foreign technologies and** rally behind the People's Liberation Army to make China great again.

There have been border talks with China and post-talks statement of 'working together to maintain peace'. Such long drawn out negotiations appear to be **purely tactical positions**. But it needs to be viewed through a **strategic prism**.

### **What are the issues with the capability of the Indian armed forces?**

The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence, in its March 2023** report has shown the shortcomings in defence hardware and equipments with Indian armed forces

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The committee has commented adversely on the **slow production rate of the Tejas fighter** by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. It noted that the IAF's urgent need to make up its **dwindling squadron numbers** through the 114 Multi Role Fighter Aircraft project.

Similar observations have been made for **hardware procurement for the Indian Army**. The committee has acknowledged that **funds are scarce**. It has recommended that allocation for defence should be 3% of GDP to maintain India's deterrent posture.

The ongoing one-year-plus **Russia-Ukraine conflict** has shown that power is not just about **possessing capability** but also about the **capacity-to-last-the-distance too**. India's acquisition plans must be oriented accordingly.

### 62. IITs need to make science empathetic and inclusive

**Source-** The post is based on the article "IITs need to make science empathetic and inclusive" published in "The Indian Express" on 19th April 2023.

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

**Relevance-** Issues faced by institutions of higher education in India

**News-** The IITs are in the news again for a spate of suicides.

#### **What are the reasons for differences across various social groups at IITs?**

There exists a **gap in capabilities**. For JEE Advanced 2022, the cut-off for admission for general category candidates was much higher compared to SC candidates. The median score of eligible SC candidates was very low.

There are **many cultural reasons and some material ones**. The Census 2011 data for Maharashtra tells us that 76% of the general population had had **latrines at home** in comparison to 57% of SC families. The fraction of SC households with a scooter was 14% while that for the general category it was 24%

This **inequality persists in other basic amenities** as well. Thus, reaching school or college or even finding time for it is harder for SC students.

But this inequality is not only about social class. There are inequities in the **access to water too**.

#### **What is the best approach to learning at academic institutions?**

The material inequality in society should be intensely studied by universities. Students of all disciplines should conduct **field and community studies** to understand its causes and provide insights.

Engineers can **design robust solutions** and social scientists would ensure that these indeed work.

Professors would transmit this knowledge to government agencies and companies so that this inequality reduces.

For students, such **interdisciplinary field work** will bring a **shared experience of the realities** of their society. They will engage in an **open and honest discussion** about its problems.

This will help students to develop **mutual respect, empathy and a collective understanding** of how the state and the market work. Such a **constructive engagement** by the university can make higher education empathetic.

**Diversity is important** in this scheme. Only a diverse student and faculty body will be able to uncover facts and design more **effective and sustainable solutions**. More **equitable societies** will produce **better professionals** and citizens and a **diverse set of role models**.

#### **How will this approach be helpful for IITs?**

The above approach can easily bring change for the IITs. Faculty members can work with district administrations to address these issues and involve both IIT and local college students.

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This will prepare an **ecosystem of higher education** that satisfies its **institutional as well as cultural roles**.

For the IITs, such an approach will certainly improve the **social environment** within the student body. It will reduce **competitive stress and increase collaboration and teamwork**.

Students will also appreciate the **great diversity of backgrounds** and understand the adversities many among them have had to face. It will show them that for **most real-life problems**, unlike the JEE.

It will inculcate in them the **true spirit of science of empathy, exploration and teamwork** — where the laboratory is the wide world outside.

### **What are other issues with academic institutions in India?**

The socio-economic problems require the **sustained engagement** of the smartest people and the most innovative companies and enterprises. Elite institutions have failed to convert our problems into **opportunities and solutions**.

That has resulted in a **shortage of jobs and the lottery of competitive exams**. The IITs now are **merely the marketplace** for the few good jobs.

### **What is the way forward for more inclusive learning in higher educational institutions?**

It is also time for the students from IIT to reject this **market-based approach**.

**Sustainability** is now the core concern of state agencies and national and international companies. They need a science which is free, a science which probes and explores **all issues of knowledge and society**.

There is a need for training in this **science of empathy and diversity**. Indian science needs to become **more democratic**. Then universities will become **more empathetic** and society **more equal and prosperous**.

### 63. [Tweak The Tech – MNREGA’s process change to reduce corruption is hurting those who need jobs. GoI must have a relook](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Tweak The Tech – MNREGA’s process change to reduce corruption is hurting those who need jobs. GoI must have a relook**” published in **The Times of India** on **19th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

**Relevance:** About the process ‘improvements’ in MGNREGA.

**News:** The app-based attendance and Aadhaar-enabled payments were introduced in MGNREGA. But these process ‘improvements’ in MGNREGA have hampered the interface for the poor and deterred people from seeking work.

#### **About the process ‘improvements’ in MGNREGA**

Last year, the government introduced a national mobile monitoring software. The software can record attendance in real-time, with geotags and photographs. The move was intended to minimise corruption and provide oversight. But, the software has also made the MGNREGA work inaccessible to many poor households.

**Must read:** [MGNREGA: Issues and Significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **How do process ‘improvements’ in MGNREGA hamper access to the poor?**

**a)** wage payments are delayed, **b)** only 43% of MNREGA workers qualified for the new Aadhaar-based payment system. This is because they have not been able to fill in their details, **c)** workers losing wages because of errors in the attendance system, **d)** worksite supervisors having to buy smartphones to use the app, **d)** connectivity and app errors are also associated with the system.

**Read more:** [What could be the govt's calculations behind the slashing of the MGNREGA budget](#)

**What should be done?**

Digitisation has been one of India's success stories. But, when it comes to using tech in public services proper alternatives should be provided.

64. [Express View: A campus that is safe and free](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "A campus that is safe and free" published in the **Indian Express** on **19th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About DU's advisory for students.

**News:** Recently, the University of Delhi has issued a 17-point advisory to be implemented by colleges and departments when organising festivals and other events. These include mandatory NOC from the police, concertina wires on boundary walls. CCTVs at all gates, etc. The advisory has come in the wake of alleged security lapses in a college event.

**What is the rationale behind DU's advisory?**

Security lapses have occurred in colleges in the past. Apart from the recent instance, three women's campuses have also faced security lapses in recent times. Hence, there is a need for greater safety of students. This makes it more necessary for authorities to issue this advisory.

**What are the concerns associated with DU's advisory?**

a) Cameras in classrooms and police permission to organise routine events encroach on the privacy of students, b) Enable censoring of students and hamper students exploring new ways of being, c) Hampers study and socialisation of students in an enabling environment.

**What should be done?**

The need for greater safety should not be achieved at the cost of students' freedom. Securitisation and surveillance in the name of students' safety should be tolerated. The college should talk to the students, sensitise them to the challenges and support them in critical times. It is the only way to ensure that security does not mean having to step back from freedom.

65. [India-UAE cooperation to sow regional food security](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "India-UAE cooperation to sow regional food security" published in "The Hindu" on **20th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance:** India and UAE relationship

**News-** The article explains the cooperation in areas of food security between India and UAE.

**What is the importance of India from the perspective on food security?**

India is a **global Agri export powerhouse** with a large and growing food production and processing sector.

India has, in recent years, acted as a **humanitarian provider** of food to developing countries. It has demonstrated its evolving role in advancing **regional and global food security**.

India has also made **major budgetary outlays** towards setting up massive food parks, with due emphasis on **modern supply chain management**.

India **Public Distribution System** is the world's largest food subsidy programme. It provides nearly 800 million citizens with subsidized grains. **India's POSHAN Abhiyaan** is the world's largest nutrition programme for children and women.

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As a part of its G-20 presidency, India is promoting the consumption and farming of millets — **nutritious, drought resistant, sustainable, crops**. It demonstrates the **resilience focus** that India offers to the **global food security dialogue**.

India's G-20 presidency seeks to address the three Cs of **“Covid, Conflict, and Climate”** issues. These are important for food **security** in India and across the globe.

### **What are the areas of cooperation between India and UAE in the food sector?**

India has vast food sector experience and the ability to **operationalize the world's largest food supply chains**. It will strengthen the **India--UAE food security partnership** in a variety of ways. During the India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States summit last year, the UAE committed **\$2 billion in investment towards constructing food parks in India**.

There was signing of a **food security corridor** on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement sidelines. It has taken forward India's presence on the **global food value chain**, beyond the UAE.

The corridor could commence a **route for foods** made and processed in India. These products will begin their journey on the Indian coast of the Arabian Sea, passing through the UAE, and towards major international markets.

The corridor will emerge as a **world class template of successful Agri trade** for India. It will unlock **greater productivity, efficiency and growth** for its millions of workers and employees. For the UAE, the benefits go beyond **maintaining and diversifying** its food reserves. **Trade linkages** could enable the UAE to **leverage its strategic location** between Asia and Europe to serve as India's food export gateway to West Asia and the Africa region.

The Dubai Multi Commodities Centre launched **Agriota, an Agri trading and commodity platform** to link Indian farmers to food companies in the UAE. It gives millions of Indian farmers the opportunity to directly reach out to the entirety of the UAE's food ecosystem.

A consortium of UAE -based entities are investing up to \$7 billion in mega food parks, contract farming and the sourcing of agro commodities in India.

Those projects will generate **lakhs of non farm agri jobs**. It will enable farmers to discover better prices for their products. Bolstered by the **UAE's infrastructural capabilities**, India's agricultural products will have **more resilient and diversified place** in global marketplace.

### [66. It is a new assault on India's liberty](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“It is a new assault on India's liberty”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **20th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Polity

**Relevance**– Issues related to free speech

**News**– The Union government introduced a new set of measures for dealing with fake news and misinformation on the Internet. These introductions came through an amendment made to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, or IT Rules.

### **What are important provisions of amended IT rules?**

The amendment gives power to the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for creating a **“fact check unit”**. It will identify **false or misleading online content** that is related to the central government's business in any manner.

If social media intermediaries fail to prevent users from hosting information that has been identified as false by the fact check unit, they will lose their **“safe harbour” immunity**.

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### What are some facts about IT rules?

The Union government gets power to decide what information is bogus. It can exercise **wide ranging powers of censorship** by compelling intermediaries to take down posts deemed fake or false.

The IT Rules derive their authority from the Information Technology Act, 2000 meant to provide **“legal recognition” for electronic commerce.**

**Section 79 of the Act** provides a **“safe harbour”**. It does it by granting immunity to intermediaries, if they observe **“due diligence”** in discharging their duties and follow other guidelines prescribed by the state.

An intermediary under the law refers to any person who **receives, stores, or transmits electronic records**. It would include Internet service providers, search engines, and social media platforms.

IT Rules were introduced in 2021, are divided into two distinct parts. The rules regulate intermediaries through MeitY. Digital news media, including over-the-top (OTT) media services are regulated through the Union Ministry for Information and Broadcasting.

The IT Rules imposed a **series of obligations**. A breach of these could result in a **loss of safe harbour**.

The rules required social media platforms to provide **technological solutions** to identify the first originator of any information on their service, where demanded by government, or mandated by an order of court.

### What are the issues with amendments in IT rules?

The Union government gets power to decide what information is bogus. It can exercise **wide ranging powers of censorship** by compelling intermediaries to take down posts deemed fake or false.

The amendments introduced are a **threat to liberty**. Misinformation or fake news is rampant on the Internet. But all problems are not capable of **easy legislative solutions**. **Thoughtless censorship** is never an answer.

The **rights of the press, and common person**, to question authority, to **speak truth to power**, will be diminished.

Restrictions have not been imposed through **legislation, but through executive orders**. This is against the **substantive constitutional guarantees**.

**Article 19(1)(a)** grants every citizen a right to **freedom of speech and expression**. That right can only be limited through **reasonable restrictions** made by law on grounds stipulated in Article 19(2). Fake news and misinformation are not grounds on which speech can be limited.

The amendments made to the IT Rules do not put **limits on restraints imposed**. Instead, they confer on the Fact Check Unit limitless powers to decide what information is false and compel social media intermediaries to act based on these findings.

In **Shreya Singhal vs Union of India judgement**, the Supreme Court held that a law that limits speech can **neither be vague nor over-broad**. The amendment to the IT Rules suffers on both accounts.

**First**, the notification **fails to define fake news**. **Second**, it allows the government's fact Check unit to verify any news **“in respect of any business”** that involves the state.

There are **uses of open ended and undefined words**, especially the use of the **phrase “any business”**. It indicates that the government will have the power to decide what each of us can see, hear, and read on the Internet.



**What is the way forward for the government to act against fake news?**

There is a need for **comprehensive parliamentary legislation** on the fake news and misinformation. And legislation emanating out of such a process would put limitations on speech subjected to grounds stipulated in Article 19(2).

The government cannot act as an **arbiter of its own cause**. In France, where legislation exists to counter the spread of misinformation during elections, the declaration is made not by the government but by an independent judge.

A directive to remove misinformation is not the only solution to fake news. There are other, less **restrictive alternatives available**.

67. For civil services, HR lessons from the military

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“For civil services, HR lessons from the military”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **20th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Role of civil services in a democracy

**Relevance**– Reform in civil services

**News**– The article explains the need for adopting HR practices from the military to reform civil services.

**What are the national goals and strategy of India?**

There are **no poor people, only people in poor places**. The war on poverty is won by raising the **productivity of five physical places** — states, cities, sectors, firms, and skills.

The strategy is to replace **high employed poverty with high-paying jobs** through urbanisation, formalisation, industrialisation, financialisation and human capital.

**What are the HR practices in armed forces that should be adopted by civil services?**

**Tenure**: The Agniveer revamp will reduce an average soldier’s age, **ensure motivation** for continuing in service, and gradually **raise military capital expenditure**.

This allows organisations to **renew themselves** without complications, court cases or a huge pool of promotable but not postable.

The government must hire all new civil servants for a **fixed 10-year tenure**. The rollover percentages should be decided by a **hard-coded organisational structure**.

**Specialisation**: In a democracy’s generalists are politicians. Civil servants are **technocrats** whose mandate is **assisting in governance**.

The ideal administrator is not the gifted layman who frequently moves from job to job within service and can take a **practical view** of any problem.

Young military recruits pick an **area of expertise** early. Our civil services must replicate this.

**Structure**: The **“on-paper” performance management systems** in civil services have collapsed. Only a few civil servants don’t get to the top positions through indiscriminate promotions.

**Top heaviness** also undermines organisational effectiveness. The pyramid has become a cylinder.

Uttar Pradesh has roughly 80 DGs and additional DGs for around 2.5 lakh policemen, while the army has about 175 lieutenant generals for about 12 lakh soldiers. **Organisational structures** should be the Eiffel Towers because more work doesn’t mean more bosses.

The best solution for **differentiation in civil services** is **honest appraisals**. So organisational structure should be changed to restrict the secretary rank population in New [Delhi](#) to 25, chief secretary/DG rank in states to two.

There is a need to **introduce differential retirement ages** based on rank and **shrink the number of ministries and departments**.

### 68. The GeM In What Govt Buys

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The GeM In What Govt Buys**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **20h April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Government policies and interventions

**Relevance**– Issues related to government procurement

**News**– The [Government e Marketplace](#) (GeM) crossed a historic milestone at the end of 2022-23: Government agencies purchased goods and services worth more than Rs 2 lakh crore through more than five million online transactions in a single financial year.

#### **What are some facts about Government e Marketplace?**

The portal was launched to **align public procurement** of goods and services with **the government’s mission of ‘Minimum Government and Maximum Governance’** and his strategy of using technology to make government systems **honest, effective and accessible to all**.

The journey began with business worth Rs 422 crore in 2016-17.

GeM has grown spectacularly since it was set up in August 2016. The total value of transactions on the portal almost **doubled in 2022-23 to Rs 2. 01 lakh crore from Rs 1. 07 lakh crore in the previous fiscal**.

#### **What is the difference between the earlier system and the new system of procurement?**

Earlier the system was riddled with **inefficiencies and corruption**. Government procurement used to be **opaque, time-consuming, cumbersome, and prone to corruption and cartelization**.

Only a **privileged few** could break through huge entry barriers.

Buyers had no choice but to purchase **sub-standard goods at high, non-negotiable rates** from the privileged suppliers.

Potential sellers were completely at the **mercy of the facilitating agency**, to get empaneled, and then to get timely payments.

In the new system, there is **hardly any human interface** in vendor registration, order placement and payment processing. At every step, SMS and e-mail notifications are sent to the buyer, the head of her organisation, paying authorities and sellers.

The **paperless, cashless and faceless** GeM gives buyers the **freedom to buy goods and services** directly from unlimited sellers at competitive rates.

#### **What shows the success of the GeM portal?**

An **independent study conducted by the World Bank and IIM Lucknow** estimated an average 10% savings from the median price. The World Bank noted that with the addition of every new bidder, savings increased by 0. 55%.

A **study by Boston Consulting Group (BCG)** showed that annual cost savings in 2021-22 were in the range of 8%-11%.

The portal is home to more than **11,500 product categories**. It has over **3. 2 million listed products**. It has over **280 service categories** with more than **2. 8 lakh service offerings**.

GeM is catering to diverse procurement needs of more than 67,000 government buyer organizations, which have together saved about Rs 40,000 crore. It gives **equal opportunity to all buyers and sellers**.

About 60% of orders by value from states have gone to **micro and small enterprises**. States have also placed orders worth Rs 1,109 crore on startups. It demonstrates the ease of access for the relatively underprivileged business people.

### 69. A dispute lost – on WTO’s ruling against India

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**A dispute lost**”, published in **Business Standard** on **20<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus Topic** – GS Paper 2 – International Institutions

**Context:** Recently, WTO has ruled against India’s Tariff rates, on the complaint filed by EU. World Trade Organization (WTO) has ruled against India in a case brought by several of its trading partners. The issue was high Customs duties imposed by the Indian government on the import of telecommunications equipment, including mobile phone handset. Initially, India was taken to the dispute resolution panel of the WTO by the European Union (EU). It was later joined by Other major partners and participants in the supply chain, including Japan and Taiwan.

In this case, WTO tribunal determined that the ordinary Customs duties were above those provided in India’s WTO Schedule”.

**What are the positive impacts of high tariff rates?**

**From the view of the nation’s interest**, these tariffs have directly led to an increase in investment and the growth of the electronics manufacturing sector.

Mobile phone production and exports have grown in recent years. However, its exports have not outpaced its imports.

**What are the issues associated with high tariff policy?**

Value addition in the mobile industry in India has been low, barely crossing the 10 per cent level. Therefore, the electronics sector continues to be a major component of India’s trade deficit.

Growth, wage level and job creation in the sector will remain below India’s competitors unless it introduces more open policies that do not rely on tariffs and protectionism.

Tariffs are a tax paid by Indian consumers. They will have to purchase mobile phones and other electronics equipment at a higher price.

In Digital India, imported equipment are also input into basic economic value addition by many Indians.

Tariffs reduce the welfare of the people and make India high-cost and uncompetitive economy. There are geo-political implications of high tariffs. It can result in alienating its closest economic and geopolitical partners.

**What should be done?**

Instead of relying on tariffs, **Efficiency improvements, and coherent policies** should be prioritized.

The electronics sector is **not an infant industry in India** that must be protected. Instead, it should be given the right competitive pressure and policy environment to become world-class.

The government will definitely appeal against this ruling. However, WTO appellate body has been rendered dysfunctional by the United States’ decision to veto any nominees.

### 70. Beware Dr Hustle – on social media influencers

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**beware dr hustle**”, published in **Times of India** on **20<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus Topic** – GS Paper 2 – Government policies for various sectors

**Context:** Recently, a viral video on a chocolate drink created a controversy

India’s influencer economy – the business of using social media as a marketing and advisory tool – is expected to host 100 million influencers by end-2023.

Advertising Standards Council of India finds that 79% of respondents trust social media influencers.

Therefore, implications of influencer's videos on health are huge.

What are the implications of social media influencer's videos on health?

The influencers, who are '**doctors without degrees**', can be harmful for the health of the people. Some of the harmful effects can be reversible, but some can be irreversible such as prescribing anabolic steroid, suggesting pills for high blood sugar and even cancer.

Similarly, if a person is suffering from mental health problems, he can go online and see the videos suggesting deep breathing, which can be a short-term treatment. However, the root of the problem of that person might go undiagnosed and untreated.

Therefore, there should be light regulations for influencers. The government's list of dos and don'ts as well as a requirement that qualifications be displayed is a good idea.

### 71. The caste imperative: On the subject of an updated caste census

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**The caste imperative: On the subject of an updated caste census**" published in **The Hindu** on **20th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the demand for an updated caste census.

**News:** Recently, various political parties are demanding an updated caste census. This highlights an emerging consensus among the political parties on the need for a caste census.

**Must read:** [Caste based census in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **What is the rationale behind the demand for an updated caste census?**

Various reasons for demanding an updated caste census include,

-The recent expansion of reservation benefits to economically weaker sections among "forward" castes using income criteria,

-**Outdated data is used:** The Mandal Commission report of 1980 was based on caste census data of 1931. But that is still remaining as the basis for identifying backwardness and determining the extent of the reservation to the Other Backward Classes,

-There is a need for a comprehensive census that provides data to support, or evaluate existing reservation quotas, or assess demands for reservation policies,

-Such updated data will serve as a legal imperative and allow the government to answer the Supreme Court's call for quantifiable data.

**Must read:** [Why a Caste Census is needed and why it may not see light of the day](#)

#### **What are the challenges associated with the Socio-Economic and Caste Census in 2011?**

-Issues in defining castes: The criteria government described in 2011 created many concerns associated with the data.

-Recorded data of 46 lakh different castes, sub-castes, caste/clan surnames require adequate breakdown before being used for proper enumeration.

-The survey was conducted without utilising the Census Commissioners and the Office of the Registrar General properly.

**Read more:** [Socio-Economic and Caste Census: A Need for reforms](#)

#### **What are the challenges in creating an updated caste census?**

**a)** The government has already postponed the long-delayed 2021 Census. This raises the question about the government's present capacity to conduct an effective caste census, **b)** There is a risk of objectification of caste identities even though the Constitution seeks to build a casteless society.

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### What should be done?

An adequate consolidation of caste/sub-caste names into social groups along with the synonymy of the self-identified group names should be done prior to conducting the survey. Enlisting these groups against the OBC/Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes lists for each State. But addressing socioeconomic inequities through reservation quotas might not make advancement to a truly casteless society.

### 72. [Old friends: on Russia-India bilateral ties and the Ukraine issue](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Old friends: on Russia-India bilateral ties and the Ukraine issue**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests..

**Relevance:** About the visit of the Russian Deputy Prime Minister.

**News:** Recently, the Russian Deputy Prime Minister visited India and participated in the India-Russia Inter-governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation meeting.

### What are the key discussions held during the recent visit of the Russian Deputy Prime Minister?

- Bilateral trade went up by 2.6 times in the past year and surpassed the 2025 target.
- Both countries demanded more market access and the use of “national currencies” to circumvent sanctions.
- Russia demanded that Indian companies could increase exports in road construction and pharmaceuticals.
- They also referred to progress in negotiations for an FTA between India and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Both countries acknowledged that India-Russia ties are among the “steadiest of the major relationships of the world”.

**Read more:** [India, Russia agree to deepen trade and economic relations](#)

### About India-Russia ties during the Russia-Ukraine crisis

Since Russia’s war in Ukraine began, western sanctions have drastically cut Russian exports. Hence, Russia has increasingly joined with countries like India and China which do not join the sanctions to export resources. For example, India’s oil imports from Russia have jumped from a negligible 0.2% since the war to a massive 28% of India’s total oil intake. This gave a rise to Western accusations that India is “benefitting from the war”.

**Read more:** [China – Russia relations and its implications on India – Explained, pointwise](#)

### What should be done?

India must make its stand against the war clear. India can go behind the original reason for the current turmoil and its global economic impact.

### 73. [Why LGBTQIA+ couples should be allowed to adopt](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Why LGBTQIA+ couples should be allowed to adopt**” published in the **Indian Express** on **20th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the process of adoption by LGBTQIA+ couples.

**News:** Recently, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) opposed the granting of adoption rights to same-sex couples and said that the move will endanger the

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children. On the other hand, the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) supported the conferral of adoption and succession rights on same-sex couples.

### **About adoption principles in India**

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act), allows heterosexual married couples, and single and divorced persons to adopt.

The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA) permits any male or female Hindu of sound mind to adopt, and for couples to adopt with the consent of their spouse.

Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) permits applications from adoptive parents in live-in relationships, which it examines on a case-to-case basis.

**Note:** *Several countries around the world, including Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, South Africa, the UK and the US have legal provisions to allow unmarried same-sex couples to adopt.*

### **How do adoption principles hamper the adoption by LGBTQIA+ couples?**

-Both the HAMA and the JJ Act envisage a forthcoming adoptive couple to be heterosexual and married.

-In a situation where one partner in a non-heterosexual relationship adopts a child as a single parent, the other partner is deprived of legal recognition as an adoptive parent.

**Read more:** [Challenges associated with laws that govern adoption in India](#)

### **What are the various opinions supporting the adoption by LGBTQIA+ couples?**

**Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice** emphasised the need for uniform and comprehensive legislation on adoption applicable to all, irrespective of religion, that should also cover the LGBTQI community.

In **Deepika Singh v. Central Administrative Services, (2022) case** the Supreme Court observed that “familial relationships may take the form of domestic, unmarried partnerships or queer relationships”. These units equally deserve protection and benefits under the law.

**Must read:** [Legalising Same-sex marriages in India and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

### **What are the debates regarding the “best interest of the child”?**

**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989** requires the best interest of the child to be the primary consideration. Both the JJ Act and the Adoption rules aims to fulfil the best interest of the child. Indian courts have applied the principle of “the welfare of the child” in the context of adoption, custody, and guardianship cases and arrived at decisions on a case-to-case basis.

In **Suzanne Du Toit Anna-Marié De Vos v. Minister for Welfare and Population Development and Others, (2002) case**, the Constitutional Court of South Africa held that the exclusion of unmarried same-sex couples who are otherwise suitable to adopt, from jointly adopting children violated the principle of the paramountcy of the best interest of the child.

**Read more:** [Same-sex marriages: A matter for Parliament](#)

### **What should be done regarding the adoption by LGBTQIA+ couples?**

**Relax the criteria:** Sexual orientation or marital status cannot be the sole basis for the exclusion of same-sex couples from jointly adopting as long as they meet the suitability criteria and can ensure the best interest of the child.

**Remove discrimination:** An adopted child being raised by a same-sex couple through single parent adoption should not be discriminated against and deprived of the rights available to an adopted child raised by a heterosexual married couple.

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Both the Parliament and the Supreme Court should consider the best interest of children, as well as the fundamental right to equality and non-discrimination of children and couples identifying as LGBTQI while examining the matter.

### 74. [Be Smart, Be Humane – As more flee to Mizoram from Myanmar, New Delhi must understand costs of not having a refugee policy](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Be Smart, Be Humane – As more flee to Mizoram from Myanmar, New Delhi must understand costs of not having a refugee policy**” published in **The Times of India** on **20th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About India’s refugee influx

**News:** Military operations in Myanmar have sent more refugees across the border to Mizoram.

#### **About refugees in Mizoram**

Ever since the military coup in Myanmar in 2021, the state hosts more than 40,000 refugees from Myanmar. Many refugees are from Myanmar’s Chin community. They share ethnic kinship ties with Mizos. So, the Mizoram government is expressing a tolerant attitude.

The influx of Kuki-Chin refugees from Bangladesh into the state has also been witnessed since last year after an operation by Bangladeshi security forces.

#### **About India’s past refugee influx**

India is neither a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention nor its 1967 protocol.

India has hosted some of the largest flows of refugees of all time and **follows the principle of nonrefoulement**. This includes hosting Tibetan refugees, millions of displaced individuals during Bangladesh’s 1971 liberation war and Sri Lankan Tamils fleeing the civil war.

**Must read:** [Refugee Problem in India – Explained, Pointwise](#)

#### **What are the concerns associated with India’s approach to refugees?**

-India is unprepared for a large flow of refugees. The current system is neither able to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees nor give them a clear path forward, including translocation to a third country. This gives an opportunity for local resentment against refugees.

-An increase in Myanmar refugees led to increased criminal activities, smuggling and drug trafficking in border areas.

-Not having a refugee policy might lead to ad-hoc policy decisions. For example, India did not provide shelter to adequate numbers of Afghan refugees who worked with India and the India-friendly former Afghan government.

**Read more:** [Afghan immigrants and India’s refugee policy – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **What should be done?**

India needs to have a clear refugee framework. Instead of a patchwork of rules and Acts the government should work on a national law on refugees.

India being a fast-growing major economy and an aspiring major global player must undertake a comprehensive review of its refugee management mechanism.

### 75. A new edge to the fight against tuberculosis

**Source**– The post is based on the article “A new edge to the fight against tuberculosis” published in “The Hindu” on 21st April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 2- Issues related to development and management of health

**News** – At the One World TB Summit in Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi instilled fresh energy to global tuberculosis (TB) elimination response and reiterated India’s commitment to spearhead this effort.

**What is the progress of India in fighting against TB?**

**India’s National Tuberculosis Control Program** has introduced several measures to **find, notify and treat TB cases.**

**Case notifications** have risen from 15.6 lakh in 2014 to over 24 lakh in 2022. This reflects the program’s **expanded reach and improved detection measures.**

**Novel approaches** have been introduced to fight TB. It includes **engagement with the private sector**, launch of **social support provisions** and introduction of **diagnostic tools and new drug regimens.** It has improved **TB management.**

**What are challenges in the fight against TB?**

There is a lack of **widespread awareness** about the disease and **lack of access to quality care.** The recent **National TB Prevalence Survey** found that 64% of people with infectious TB did not seek care.

**National-level estimates** suggest that for every person notified with TB, it misses detecting almost two more cases.

**What is the way forward for elimination of TB in India?**

There is a need to introduce **disruptive approaches** and new tools to change the way for **preventing, diagnosing, and treating TB.**

**Vaccines**– For any infectious disease, a vaccine is what makes elimination possible. The **BCG vaccine** for TB does not adequately protect adolescents and adults. There is a need to prioritise and pick up the pace to find an **effective TB vaccine.**

There are currently over 15 TB vaccine candidates in the pipeline. There is a need to ensure that their clinical trials are **prioritised to assess their efficacy** in various community settings and for different target groups.

**Testing**– Testing for, and diagnosing TB needs to become **more accessible and affordable.** **Point-of-Care Tests** such as home-based tests for COVID allow **decentralised, rapid and low-cost diagnostics** to provide results within minutes. New innovations such as **nasal and tongue swab-based tests** for TB can be a game changer.

Further, **handheld digital x-ray machines** can now be taken to villages and urban settlements to screen large numbers of high-risk individuals, safely and conveniently.

**Drugs**– The development and introduction of **new therapeutic molecules** can play a crucial role in the long run. There is a need to scale up **newer and more effective regimens** and **repurpose existing drugs** for TB.

**Shorter, safer, and more effective regimens** do exist. It includes the 1HP regimen for latent TB infections, the four-month regimen for drug-susceptible TB, and the six-month regimen for drug-resistant TB. These need to be scaled up.

**Policy framework**– There is a need to create **regulatory and policy frameworks** for smooth rollout of proven tools to reach people with little delay.

This requires greater **collaboration between policymakers, scientists, product developers, clinical researchers and governments.**



**Harmonization of standards and regulatory processes** between countries is important. It can enable **mutual recognition** of **evidence-based standards and licenses**.

76. [Bring government closer to people](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Bring government closer to people**” published in **Business Standard** on **21<sup>st</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 2 – Governance**

**Relevance:** **concerns associated with local government.**

**News:** India is preparing to become an advanced economy in the next 25 years.

**What are the features of advanced economies?**

A distinguishing feature of advanced economies is their **significant allocation of revenues and responsibilities at the local government level**.

These include primary education, health care, basic law and order, and civic infrastructure — sewage, water supply, road maintenance and local zoning and regulations.

**How much does India currently spend at the state and local level of government?**

**India’s share of sub-national (state plus local) spending is at 60 percent** of total spend, which is **very high at its level of development**.

Other large federal states spend less. **For example**, Brazil spends around 50 percent while the United States around 40 per cent. **Only Canada and China spend more than 70 per cent at the subnational level**.

**What are the concerns with this devolution of money?**

**This devolution of money was proposed by the 14th Commission and was accepted by the 15th Finance Commission.**

However, simply shifting resources from the Centre to the states will not be of great help unless it reaches the lower levels of government.

**For genuine devolution**, the focus must shift to looking at ways to ensure more resources flow to local institutions, such as panchayats and mayors.

This is because many smart city projects are hampered by the inability of city mayors to deliver on their components of the scheme.

Further, the cost of delivering services at the same time improves and is made more effective and monitorable.

**What are the concerns with the local government?**

**India’s local government spend is less than 4 percent of total government spending.** This share is much smaller than in most advanced economies.

**For example**, spending by the local government in China exceeds 50 percent of total spending by the government.

Hence, India must prepare a road map for greater devolution from state-level spending to local governments and raise more local government revenues.

**How can the revenues of local government be increased?**

The best way to allow local governments to raise their own resources is an **increase in property taxes and higher user fees**.

Objections to higher property taxes from elderly owners can be handled through different means such as grandfathering clauses that exempt them during their lifetime.

**At present**, India has a very low property tax rate, accounting for around 0.5 percent of its total tax revenue and only a little over 0.1 percent of GDP.

Whereas **the OECD countries** on average collect about 5.6 percent of total tax revenue in property taxes and the US, UK and Canada at over 11- 12 per cent at the highest levels.

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### What can be the way ahead?

**The 15th Finance Commission** provided grants to states subject to them updating their property tax rates and improving collection.

This route could be used to discuss raising rates by the **upcoming 16th Finance Commission to increase local government resources.**

### [77. We require reliable data on caste to meet our aims of social justice](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“We require reliable data on caste to meet our aims of social justice”** published in the **Livemint** on **21st April 2023.**

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

**Relevance:** About the demand including caste in the census.

**News:** Recently, many political parties are demanding to include caste in India’s census.

**Must read:** [Caste based census in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

Does the present form of the census collect any caste-based data?

Yes, the Census of India is enumerating caste-based data and publishes regular detailed tables based on that. These are available for Schedule Castes (SCs) and Schedule Tribes (STs) alone. But not for Other Backward Classes (OBC) and the residual category of ‘Others’.

What is the rationale behind the demands for including caste in the census?

-For the SC and ST social groups, the percentage of seats reserved is proportional to the share of these groups in the country’s population. However, this is not the case for the OBC group. The OBC groups are demanding a proportionate share of the reservation

-At present, Central and State governments have gone to the extent of extending reservations to various communities to fulfil political favouritism. A reliable estimate on caste will remove such political favouritism.

**Read here:** [The caste imperative: On the subject of an updated caste census](#)

About the previous demands for including caste in the census

-The Mandal Commission requested the home ministry to include caste in the 1981 Census.

-Caste as a category was enumerated as part of a nationwide [Socio-Economic Caste Census \(SECC\)](#) in 2011-12 to identify beneficiaries for various government programmes. The SECC has since been adopted by most government programmes, including for the identification of beneficiaries under the [National Food Security Act](#). As part of the SECC data on caste was collected but was kept apart from other socioeconomic indicators.

-A Supreme Court judgement in 2022 made empirical estimates of different castes conditional for reservation in local bodies.

-The government set up a committee to analyse the data on caste from the SECC under the chairpersonship of Arvind Panagariya. But there has been little progress since then and the data has not been released.

- Karnataka conducted its own caste census in 2017. However, even the results of that census have not been released. Another caste census is currently underway in Bihar.

Why should be done?

Data from an all-India caste enumeration might create pressure from OBC representatives for a larger chunk of reservations as pressure groups arise from within this vast social group.

The government must use the existing SECC data on caste. Since caste does not change over the years, India’s SECC data is still reliable. This will allow a better understanding of the socio-economic status of various castes.

**Must read:** [Why a Caste Census is needed-and why it may not see light of the day](#)

### 78. [Express View on delay of Consumption Expenditure Surveys, census: Let data flow](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Express View on delay of Consumption Expenditure Surveys, census: Let data flow**” published in the **Indian Express** on **21st April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the implications of delaying surveys.

**News:** India’s own census enumeration exercise which was meant to take place in 2021 has now been postponed to 2024-25. Similarly, results of the National Statistical Office’s consumption expenditure survey 2022-23 may now be released only after the general elections in 2024.

**Note:** *The 2017-18 consumption expenditure survey was junked by the government due to “quality issues”.*

What are the implications of delaying surveys?

**Absence of credible data:** The major utility of the consumption expenditure data is estimating poverty and inequality. With no recent consumption expenditure survey, there is little consensus on the trends in poverty and inequality. Further, several economists will put forth their estimates based on different data sources and present differing assessments. For instance, the “State of Working India 2021” report estimated a sharp increase in poverty during the pandemic. On the other hand, few other experts estimated reduction in poverty.

**Reliance on other datasets increases:** The utility of the consumption expenditure data is not limited to estimating poverty and inequality. These surveys are also used for rebasing GDP and CPI. In the absence of such surveys, reliance on other datasets only increases.

**Limit the policymaker’s option:** The absence of credible data affects the ability of policymakers to make well-judged choices.

What should be done?

Data that is accurate and timely forms the bedrock of policy-making. Hence, measures need to be taken to strengthen the statistical system and safeguard its independence in situations such as pandemics and elections.

### 79. [The missing Muslim woman in the workforce](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The missing Muslim woman in the workforce**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **22nd April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Vulnerable actions of the population. GS1- social empowerment

**Relevance:** Issues related to women’s empowerment.

**News:** The article deals with the issues of the employment status of Muslim women.

What are the statistics about Muslims in higher education?

**AISHE 2021 data on higher education enrolment** in the country showed that there were more women than men from the Muslim community in undergraduate courses. Out of 1,000 Muslim students in higher education, 503 are women.

But, there has been an **absolute decrease in Muslims in higher education**. The number of students from the community in higher education decreased to 19.21 lakh in 2020-21 from 21 lakhs in 2019-20.

What are three disturbing trends shown by PLFS related to the employment status of women?

The **female labour force participation (FLFP) rate** has stagnated at very low levels in our country. Women’s employment is seen as a **supplemental source of income**.

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The share of women employed in **unpaid labour** has increased even for highly educated women. In 2017-18, 6.2% of women with graduate or higher levels of education worked as unpaid helpers. By 2021-22, this share had increased to 11.2 per cent.

What are the issues with the employment status of Muslim women?

Muslim women are absent from the workforce.

The **female labour force participation rate of Muslim women** in the country is 15%, as compared to 26.1% for Hindu women.

Over the past three years, Muslim women have had the **lowest LFP rate** amongst all religious groups in the country.

Only 12.4% of working Muslim women **are salaried** as compared to 16.2% of Hindu women.

What is the way forward to have more Muslim women in workplaces?

Employers need to ensure **women's inclusion** in the workplace. They should also take an **intersectional approach**.

Research shows that Muslim women face **significant discrimination in hiring** at entry-level roles. There is a need to **incorporate mechanisms** to address **biases in hiring**.

There is a need to **avoid faith stereotyping, and design inclusive networking opportunities and company events**. It is necessary to promote **cultural awareness**, create an **inclusive schedule for employees with faith-related needs**. Women should be **offered compassion and support**.

Government and policymakers need to make those jobs available that women want. They need to **create ecosystems** that are supportive of employed women. This involves creating space for women from all communities in **policy conversations**.

Families and society need to prioritise women's employment so that women can have **agency, express themselves, and expand their sources of happiness**.

The stereotype of men being the **sole breadwinner** of the family puts a lot of pressure on them. Women can be brought in to **share this burden**.

### [80. The LoC agreement of 2007 deserves a relook](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"The LoC agreement of 2007 deserves a relook"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **22nd April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance:** India – Pakistan bilateral issues

**News:** A former Special Envoy has confirmed in his book that the agreement on the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir, was ready to be signed by then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistan President General Musharraf. But, the stand-off in Pakistan with the judiciary and the 26/11 attacks in 2008 has halted its progress.

What are some facts about the proposed agreement on LoC?

The agreement proposed a **"4-point solution"** and a **"14 -point set of guidelines"** for any settlement between the two countries. It includes **free flow of trade, ending cross border terrorism, respect for human rights, and bringing down military presence** on both sides of the LoC

The Line of Control has to be **respected like a normal border** between the two countries.

What is the current situation of the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan?

A **series of terror attacks**, from Mumbai to Pathankot and Pulwama has spoiled the relationship. **The reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir** in August 2019, and the **amendment to Article 370** have made it difficult for any Pakistani leader to propose a **restoration of ties**.

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There are **no political contacts** at any level, **no trade, no direct travel links and no High Commissioners** in each other's countries.

What are the steps taken by the current government for the normalisation of relations with Pakistan?

Prime Minister continued to seek engagement with Islamabad even after the several setbacks, **Back-channel talks** are believed to run between National Security Adviser and Pakistani intelligence. It focuses on **preventing hostilities**. The LoC ceasefire agreement of 2021 was the result of it.

The two sides have also discussed measures that would lead to the **restoration of statehood** and elections in J&K, the **reappointment of High Commissioners** and the **restoration of visas and people-to-people ties**.

These include initiatives such as the **Kartarpur Corridor** and the proposed **Sharda Peeth Corridor** across the temple in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir's Neelum Valley.

The next step would be to revisit the **nearly ready agreement** of 15 years ago.

Do the recent moves by the Indian government on J&K have an impact on relations between India and Pakistan?

New Delhi's moves to revoke J&K's special status and Statehood did not change the **basis for a settlement** of the J&K dispute. Article 370 was always a **temporary provision**, and diluted over the decades. It was never recognised by Pakistan. Article 35(A) has had little to no effect in **changing demography** thus far.

The **move on gender parity** in property inheritance had already been implemented in 2002. The move related to **downgrading the State to a Union Territory** will be reversed.

What is the way forward for India in its relationship with Pakistan?

**Unjust arrests** and a continuing **security crackdown on politicians and civil society** in J&K should be stopped. There is a need to relook at measures like **internet bans and a stringent lockdown, targeting of journalists and human rights violations**.

There is a need to end **cross-border terrorism** from Pakistan that the people of J&K, have suffered from for decades.

Despite the precarious situation within J&K, the LoC has been **more or less stable** for more than half a century. Any military operation by either India or Pakistan to reclaim the other side is unlikely to make much headway.

Pakistan is **facing internal crises**. **China at the Line of Actual Control** is a bigger challenge for India. So, India needs a more **stable Line of Control**.

**Revisiting the agreement on LoC** about a decade -and -a half ago is eventually the only way forward.

### 81. Botanical Gardens and life on Earth

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Botanical gardens and life on earth**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **22nd April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Environment and ecology

**Relevance:** In-situ conservation of ecology.

**News:** The Tamil Nadu government has decided to establish a large botanical garden (the Chengalpattu Botanical Garden) in the State.

What is the importance of gardens?

Plants form the **basis of civilization**. Humanity has had a **long association with gardens**. The tradition of home gardens has been noted in ancient texts and depicted in cave paintings.

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Gardens **capture a part of the earth's biodiversity** for our enjoyment. Modern academic gardens often have hundreds and thousands of dried plant specimens for research.

Rulers, from ancient civilisations to modern ones owned botanical gardens rich in native plants and plants collected from distant places. A beautiful garden was an **important metric of one's prosperity and administration.**

Between the 15th to 17th centuries, European explorations led to the establishment of several academic botanical gardens. The oldest of these, **Orto Botanico di Padova in Italy**, was founded in 1545.

The most well-known, the **Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew near London**, was formally consolidated in 1840.

What are some facts about botanical gardens in India?

The oldest of the Indian Botanic gardens called the **Acharya Jagadish Chandra (AJC) Bose Indian Botanic Garden**, in Howrah was established in 1787. The Garden is spread over 109 hectares.

Kolkata is also the headquarters of the **Botanical Survey of India**. It is the country's major research centre in botanical surveys and documentation.

The exact number of botanical gardens in India is not known. The published number ranges from **between 10 to 35.**

What are the issues with India's approach to botanical gardens?

Globally, botanical gardens are **important centres for plant exploration, discovery and research, and biodiversity outreach.**

Indian botanical gardens have often lacked this **wider perspective.** Only a few botanical gardens have **plant exploration and education programmes.**

India is among the countries with a high diversity of plants and animals, with an estimated 18,000 to 20,000 plant species. Yet, our knowledge of our **vast botanical heritage is extremely limited.**

Our scientific and educational institutions have neglected many **aspects of plant biology: taxonomy, ecology, evolution, population ecology and stress biology.**

What are some facts about the proposed botanical garden in Tamil Nadu?

The ₹300 crores Chengalpattu Botanical Garden is being planned across 138 hectares. It will be **India's largest botanical garden.**

The CBG has the potential to become a **major centre for the exploration and discovery** of India's plant wealth. It will be a **centre of research, education, citizen science, and outreach** in plant biology. It will be a **forceful voice in conservation.**

The Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew has been chosen as a **key partner for technical expertise** on what plants to use and how to maintain them.

What measures can be taken for the success of the proposed botanical garden?

Many institutions and individuals in India also have **relevant and appropriate expertise** in the design and development of gardens. It can be used.

In the past two decades, the botanical gardens in Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia, have set **new standards in their research and outreach programmes. Collaboration** with such gardens could be immensely beneficial.

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### 82. [Our land records modernization initiative has a major gap to plug](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Our land records modernization initiative has a major gap to plug**” published in **Live Mint** on **24<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – E-Governance

**Relevance:** concerns associated with the process of land document registration.

**News:** The article discusses the steps taken by the government for digitizing land records and lacunae that still exist.

**What steps have been taken by the government for digitizing land records?**

**Read Here:** [Bhu-Aadhaar or ULPIN will digitise land records for efficient land usage — but incrementally](#)

However, the concern lies with the process of document registration of land.

**What are the concerns with the process of document registration of land?**

The process of document registration of land has not yet been digitized and it **relies on the outdated physical mode of registration**.

In India, most property documents must compulsorily be registered under the colonial **Registration Act, 1908**, failing which they cannot be admitted in court (in case of a dispute) as evidence.

Most states still require participants to present physically at the sub-registrar’s office to produce physical copies of papers and fulfil the offline criteria to acquire physical registration certificates. As a result, **registering documents at the sub-registrar’s office is a time-consuming process, taking two days or more just for submitting the paperwork**.

**What can be done to bring changes in the document registration process?**

The physical registration slows down the entire registration procedure. Hence, **there is a need to modernize the registration process** to facilitate the ease of doing business and of living by leveraging technological advancements.

Some state governments have started amendment of specific provisions of the Registration Act to introduce some form of an electronic registration process. However, there is no uniform approach across the country.

Hence, the **following amendments should be done in the Registration Act, 1908** – a) allow **online submission of documents and remote online appearance** of parties and witnesses, b) provision for the **electronic verification of parties**, c) allowing online exchanges of queries between parties and the registrar, d) allowing **registrars to issue electronic registration certificates and maintain a digital backup** of such records.

The amendments **must establish minimum standards for remote online registration to ensure that registration throughout India** is undertaken in a safe and secure manner.

This would facilitate **the creation of an integrated land registry for the country**.

Moreover, these amendments should be supported by further legal initiatives, **such as remote notarization and clarity on electronic instrument stamping**.

**Given the digital gap in India**, the government should also create a transition strategy of moving from physical to online registration.

**What can be the way ahead?**

**Document registration is a basic legal requirement**. Modernising this procedure will be a significant step towards the realisation of **Digital India’s Vision of presence-less, paper-less services**.

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### 83. When Law Creates Crimes – on Use of Section 144

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**When Law Creates Crimes – Instead of emergency use, police is deploying Section 144 to bring routine everyday situations under its purview, treating the entire population as potential criminals**” published in **The Times of India** on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance – Criminal Justice System

**News:** Section 144 of the CrPC was imposed in parts of Bihar and West Bengal amidst violence erupting during Ram Navami processions.

**What is Section 144 of the CrPC?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What are some of the findings on imposing Section 144 in Delhi?**

As per the RTI response, 6,100 orders were passed under Section 144 by Delhi police during the one-year period.

This large number of orders suggests that Delhi police used Section 144 **as a tool in general situations as well, instead of using it just as an emergency instrument.**

As per the findings, **25% of the 5,400 orders were issued** to various private establishments to install CCTV cameras for surveillance purposes, such as ATMs and banks, owners of girls' schools/PGs/hostels, etc.

Further, **43% of the Section 144 orders were issued** to regulate a variety of businesses and services including recording and registering of documents.

These orders mandated landlords/property owners/ factory owners to furnish details regarding tenants/ laborer/servants before providing them with accommodation.

Moreover, **1.5% of the orders focused on** imposing a blanket restriction on unlawful assembly. Some of the orders issued under Section 144 even regulated activities such as the use of “special manjhas” while flying kites, bursting crackers, while other orders prohibited the consumption of tobacco in hookah bars, etc.

**What are some of the issues associated with the findings?**

**First, these orders treated the entire class of the population as potential criminals**, who require constant monitoring and surveillance. As a result, **everyday situations were brought under the purview of the state.**

**Second, Section 144 has been used to create a parallel surveillance network, with no legal accountability and zero oversight.**

**Third, a large number of these orders were issued again after the expiry of the two-month period, leading to a cyclical state of Section 144.**

The **Supreme Court has passed a series of judgments emphasizing that the use of Section 144 should be restricted and time limited.** However, this does not seem to be the reality on the ground, especially in Delhi.

Hence, it is time for a change and a need to rethink the place of Section 144, CrPC in our democratic polity.

### 84. A new troika for India's northeast region

**Source-** The post is based on the article “A new troika for India's northeast region” published in “The Hindu” on 24th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**Relevance-** Regional cooperation for development of northeast

**News-** Recently, the third India-Japan Intellectual Dialogue was hosted by the Asian Confluence (ASCON), in Agartala. It showed that the current decade may produce path-breaking changes in the northeast, bringing the troika of Bangladesh, India and Japan closer.



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### **What is the current scenario of the northeastern region?**

The region comprising India's eight northeastern States is undergoing **dramatic change**. It has overcome several **security challenges**. It is now heading toward **economic development**. Political changes have been helpful.

There is **extensive web of linkages** with neighbouring Bangladesh. Japan has emerged as a **significant development partner** for both India and Bangladesh.

### **What are some facts about Matarbari Deep Sea Port?**

It is an important project on the **southeastern coast of Bangladesh**. It is being constructed with Japanese assistance and is scheduled to be operational in 2027.

A **recent ASCON study** envisages this port to be **"a game changer"**.

The **long-term vision** is for Bangladesh and the northeast to become a **hub and key industrial corridor** of this region.

### **What are the steps needed for the development of the northeastern region?**

**Increased connectivity** of roads and railways is important. But it is not enough without the creation of **regional industrial value chains**. Hence, **rapid industrialisation** in the sectors where the northeast enjoys **competitive advantage** assumes significance.

Roads and ports must be accompanied by **job opportunities**. It can come only from new industrial enterprises.

The northeast is blessed with **vast natural resources**. Its **strategic location** is an asset. There is a need to **create value chains and manufacture products** across diverse sectors. These include agro-processing, man-made fibers, handicrafts, assembly of two-wheelers, mobile phones, and pharmaceuticals.

### **What is the way forward for regional cooperation in the northeast region?**

Japan as a single investor in the northeast is unworkable. Indian companies too must invest. India must ease **restrictions on the flow of investments** from Bangladesh. The three governments should have **closer economic cooperation**.

India needs to facilitate the **better connectivity of Bangladesh** with other neighbours. India can assist Bangladesh in becoming an **integral part of the Act East Policy** by doing so.

When issues of **regional cooperation and integration** are discussed, BIMSTEC is neglected. This must change. The group must progress towards its vision of **establishing the Bay of Bengal Community**.

Second, the goal of **connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia** requires strong efforts. This leadership can come from the **triad of Bangladesh, India and Japan (BIJ)**. A **BIJ Forum** should be launched first at the level of Foreign Ministers.

### [85. Behind the 'Russia tilt' – Unpacking India's 'national interest', more than a year after the invasion](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Behind the 'Russia tilt' – Unpacking India's 'national interest', more than a year after the invasion"** published in the **Business Standard** on **24th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests..

**Relevance:** About India's 'national interest' and the Russia-Ukraine war.

**News:** More than a year has passed since the armies of the Russian Federation launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In the past year, Russian ministers regularly interacted with India and vice versa. But similar interactions with Ukraine are rare.

### **How have India – Russia relations been shaped in the recent past?**

-India needs the Russians for oil, weapons and for their Security Council vote. Russia has increased its share of crude oil imports into India.

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*Note: A large proportion of this oil, after all, is being processed and then re-exported.*

**Read more:** [Old friends: on Russia-India bilateral ties and the Ukraine issue](#)

**What are the concerns associated with India-Russia ties in recent times?**

**Sustainability of India's energy purchase from Russia:** The People's Republic of China is building up the infrastructure required to increase its use of Russian fossil fuels. Once it is done, it can hurt India's heavy reliance on Russian supplies, especially in a crisis.

**India's excess reliance on Russian Weaponry:** According to experts, the current stock of Indian weapons platforms that are of Russian origin is over 80%. The major concerns of this are, **a)** India's military procurements might be threatened if Russia decided to replenish their domestic arsenal due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis, **b)** Experts questions the actual quality of Russian weaponry as their performance in the Ukraine war is not up to the expected level.

**Russia's support in the Security Council:** The closer Russia gets to China the less reliable a vote it will be in security council.

Despite these concerns, Russia can and will be central to India's military preparedness in the decades to come.

**Must read:** [China – Russia relations and its implications on India – Explained, pointwise](#)

**What are the challenges in maintaining India's 'national interest' at present?**

**Issues in maintaining Non-alignment:** Non-alignment worked during the Cold War because India was not a direct target of either Russia or The US. But, in a 21st-century Cold War might happen between The US and China. China is seen as a strategic rival by India, so it is harder to stay non-aligned.

**Limited Western help to India:** The West can and will do only a little for India in a moment of crisis. For instance, the Western countries did not collaborate well with India when Indian soldiers died on the Chinese border a few years ago.

**Must read:** [The Russia-Ukraine Conflict – Explained, pointwise](#)

86. [NCERT Textbook team members write: Curriculum has been rationalised for the times](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**"We Don't Get History. So, Let's Not Study It"** published in **The Times of India** on **24th April 2023**.

**"NCERT Textbook team members write: Curriculum has been rationalised for the times"** published in the **Indian Express** on **24th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the revision of NCERT textbooks.

**News:** The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has made 1,334 changes in 182 books to its syllabus for various classes.

**About the present revision of NCERT textbooks**

NCERT rationalisation exercise took place in 2020-2021. The NCERT took feedback from teachers from KVS and other schools and CBSE practitioners on the rationalised content across subject areas.

The details were made public for the benefit of schools in 2022-23. Schools accepted these changes and modified their curricula and assessment policies. After the books were released in the market for the year 2023-24.

**What are the recent changes in the NCERT syllabus?**

**Must read:** [Changes to the NCERT syllabus and associated issues – Explained, pointwise](#)

### What is the rationale behind the changes in NCERT textbooks?

**Addressing the learning gaps created during the Covid pandemic:** Various experts and committees, including the Parliament Standing Committee, have revealed that learning gaps have developed among students. Hence, to compensate for time loss and facilitate the speedy recovery in students' learning curves a revision of NCERT textbooks is necessary.

**Read here:** [Rationale and challenges associated with the changes to the NCERT syllabus](#)

### What are the criteria used by NCERT for the recent revision of textbooks?

**a)** Removing the overlapping of content amongst different subjects in the same class, **b)** Removing similar content in the lower or higher class in the same subject, **c)** Enable content that is easily accessible to children and does not require much intervention from the teachers can be learned through self-learning or peer learning, **d)** Removing content that is not relevant in the present context and **e)** Reducing difficulty levels.

### What is the response of the NCERT expert team to various media debates?

**Allegations about deleting the Mughal period are wrong:** Whatever is removed or rationalised has been included – either in the same subject in different classes or in a different subject in the same class. For example, the Class XII History textbook, “Themes in Indian History Part-II”, has another theme on the Mughals, ‘Peasant, Zamindars and the State, Agrarian Society and the Mughal Empire (16th and 17th centuries)’. This chapter covers important facets related to the society and economy of the medieval period. Similarly, the Class XI textbook, “Themes in World History” book refers to Babur, Akbar, and the construction of the Taj Mahal as well.

**Changes are not politically motivated:** The mention of Nathuram Godse’s caste in the Class XII History textbook was deemed inappropriate by the expert committee. The section “Controversies regarding Emergency” was also dropped.

The committee considered the developments related to the imposition of the Emergency, retained in the reprinted version, sufficient to give students the basic knowledge about the crisis of democratic order and abuse of power.

**Read more:** [NCERT textbook revision](#)

### What are the areas missed in the recent revision of NCERT textbooks?

The Industrial Revolution is a key historical development, but it is not mentioned comprehensively. Similarly, today’s climate crisis is also not mentioned exhaustively.

### 87. [Indian diplomacy and the horses of interest, morality](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Indian diplomacy and the horses of interest, morality” published in “The Hindu” on 25th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**Relevance-** Indian foreign policy

**News-** During her recent official visit to India, Ukraine’s First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs talked about the dichotomy of India’s pursuit of its interests in global affairs.

### What are criticisms of the West against the conduct of foreign policy by India?

There is wide variance between **India’s moral stand** and the **pursuit of national interests** in not condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

India has been accused in the past of **contradictions** in its **prescriptions for the global community** and what it **pursues itself**.

India was severely **critical of U.S. actions** in Vietnam, the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt in 1956. But it maintained a relative **silence on Soviet operations** in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan.

### **What is the basic difference between the Indian discourse on foreign affairs in earlier days and in current times?**

India's foreign policy principles were rooted in **contemporary World Order's principles**. Now, the inspiration flows from the **wisdom of ancient India**, with the claim that its worldwide application would contribute to the welfare of the planet.

Earlier Indian approach did not pay attention to national constituencies. **Combative language** was seldom used, especially at senior political levels. That has now changed.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has pointed the **contradictions in western prescriptions** to the rest of the world in the context of the Ukraine war and the pursuit of its own interests. A few months after he became Minister, Mr. Jaishankar famously said in the U.S. that India's reputation was not made by a newspaper in New York.

Some Sangh Parivar intellectuals avoid the use of the word '**Vishwa Guru**' in their writings.

**Ancient Indian heritage** can show the path to lead the world out of its present troubles.

They lay stress on **Indian traditions of spiritual democracy, celebration of diversity, harmony with nature**, the framing of development policies for **interests of the poorest**, and the **idea of a world as a family**.

### **What are the contradictions in the ancient Indian approach?**

These principles were not the only ways of Indic thought about the world. For instance, there was the concept of a **lawless world** where the brave and powerful prevailed. It was part of the political idea contained in the term '**matsya nyaya**'.

There are questions whether these **Indic principles** were applied in reality. Ancient India history was also **full of turbulence and violence**.

### 88. Pending Bills, the issue of gubernatorial inaction

**Source**– The post is based on the article "**Pending Bills, the issue of gubernatorial inaction**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **25th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Issues and challenges pertaining to federal structure

**Relevance**: Issues related to power of governor related to legislative matters

**News**- Recently, Tamil Nadu Assembly passed a resolution urging the President of India to fix a timeline for assent to be given to Bills passed by the Assembly.

### **Is it appropriate on part of the state to pass a resolution for informing the President about inaction of the governor on a bill passed by legislature?**

**Article 355** of the Constitution says that it **shall be the duty of the Union** to ensure that the government of every State is carried on **in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution**.

This article was meant to provide **justification for central intervention** in the States. But, its **scope and range** need to be widened.

The Constitution requires the Governor to act when a Bill is passed by the Assembly as per the options given in **Article 200**.

If he does not act in accordance with the Constitution, he is creating a situation where governance of the state is **not in accordance with constitutional provisions**.

In such a situation, the government of the State has a constitutional duty to **invoke Article 355** and inform the President about it. So, a resolution by the Assembly should be considered legitimate action.

### **What are the powers of the governor in respect of the Bill passed by assembly and presented to her?**

**Article 200** provides options to the Governor when a Bill is presented to him after being passed by the legislature. These options are: **to give assent; to withhold assent; to send it back to the Assembly to reconsider it; or to send the Bill to the President for his consideration**.

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In case the Assembly reconsiders the Bill as per the request of the Governor under the third option, he must give assent even if the Assembly passes it without accepting any of the suggestions of the Governor.

**Sitting on a Bill** passed by the Assembly is not an option given by the Constitution. The Governor, by doing so, is only acting against **constitutional direction**.

**What are issues regarding the governor's power to withhold assent to a bill passed by the state legislature?**

A plain reading of Article 200 suggests that the Governor can withhold the assent.

So, the question of crucial importance is whether the Governor can withhold his assent to a Bill in exercise of his **discretionary powers**. Or, whether he can do so only on the **advice of the Council of Ministers**.

Under **Article 154 of the Constitution**, the Governor can exercise his executive powers **only on the advice of the Council of Ministers**. So, there is a view that the Governor can withhold assent to a Bill only on ministerial advice.

But another view is that why the Council of Ministers should advise the Governor to **withhold assent** after the Bill has been passed by the Assembly. If the government wanted to repeal it after it became an Act, it could have it repealed by the House.

The government can also advise the Governor to withhold assent if it has second thoughts on the Bill after it has been passed.

Under the Indian Constitution, the exercise of the power vested in the Governor to **withhold assent** may not be confined to the Council of Ministers advising the Governor. But the larger question is why a Governor should be allowed to **withhold assent** when the Bill is passed by the Assembly.

A Bill is brought before the Assembly when there is some urgency about legislation. It may be a part of the **policy of the elected government**.

Under the constitutional scheme, the Governor is only a **constitutional head** and has **no real powers**. **Withholding assent** means the death of that Bill.

Thus, the Governor can negate the **will of the legislature**, and thereby negate the **will of the people**. The Constitution cannot be assumed to permit the Governor to do that.

### [89. The problem with universal child rights: Cultural differences abound in how we raise children](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "The problem with universal child rights: Cultural differences abound in how we raise children" published in "The Indian Express" on 25th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

**Relevance-** Issues related to children

**News-** The recently released film, Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway reminds us that child-rearing is deeply rooted in culture

**What are some facts about the UN convention on children's rights?**

The UN convention does not aim to impose a **global format on child-rearing or educational practices**. It intends to provide a **protective cover** for children from the consequences of **economic hardship, entrenched inequalities, and abuse of different kinds**.

**What are the issues raised by the film?**

It represents a young woman's struggle against a **prejudiced and arrogant bureaucracy** in Norway for her child.

In a progressive country like Norway, harsh treatment is provided to a young immigrant family from Bengal in this film for custody of her child. Norway is known for its role as a **peace broker**, its professed **commitment to feminism**, and its **progressive system of education**.

In countries like Norway, separation of children from parents whose lifestyle and practices raises concerns.

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Each culture has its **norms and practices** for raising children. What is normal in one culture may be vehemently disapproved of in another country.

It shows the vulnerability of children in a **globalised world**.

### 90. [India's evacuation diplomacy – Express View on Sudan crisis: Indian government's efforts to evacuate nationals are commendable](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Express View on Sudan crisis: Indian government's efforts to evacuate nationals are commendable**” published in the **Indian Express** on **25th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2: Indian diaspora.

**Relevance:** About India's evacuation diplomacy.

**News:** India has begun ‘Operation Kaveri’ to evacuate around 4,000 nationals currently stranded in Khartoum and other parts of Sudan.

#### **About the present issue in Sudan**

Sudan, the third-largest country in Africa, is immensely rich in resources — from gold to fossil fuels. Sudan's strategic geography and inherent value have made it a target for exploitation by world powers, countries in its neighbourhood and also from local groups.

**Read here:** [Why are Sudan's army and paramilitary forces fighting each other?](#)

#### **What is the significance of India's evacuation diplomacy?**

Over the years, India has been adept at using its diplomatic skill and leveraging goodwill to ensure that Indians overseas are able to return to the country when they are faced with a crisis at their destinations, especially in West Asia and Africa. For example, ‘Operation Ganga’ was conducted in Ukraine to evacuate students and others from the conflict zone.

**Read more:** [Hakki Pikkis caught in Sudan conflict: Why this tribe of bird catchers travels to Africa from Karnataka](#)

#### **What should be done?**

The diaspora is a crucial part of the economy. Hence, India must continue to do evacuation diplomacy to protect the lakhs of Indians who work and live across the world.

The international community must do all it can to bring the warring parties in Sudan to agree to a ceasefire and ensure the transition that was promised in 2019.

### 91. [Evolution teaches children that change is an opportunity, erasing it from NCERT textbooks is huge disservice](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Evolution teaches children that change is an opportunity, erasing it from NCERT textbooks is huge disservice**” published in the **Indian Express** on **25th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the revision of NCERT textbooks.

**News:** The NCERT had recommended some “rationalisation” of the contents of high-school science textbooks.

#### **What are the recent changes in the NCERT syllabus?**

**Must read:** [Changes to the NCERT syllabus and associated issues – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **What is the rationale behind the changes in NCERT textbooks?**

**Read here:** [Rationale and challenges associated with the changes to the NCERT syllabus](#)

### What are the science-related concerns raised with NCERT textbook revision?

The revision removed nearly all references to concepts and methods for the study of biological evolution, and renamed the chapter on “Heredity and Evolution” as “Heredity.” The revision also removed Charles Darwin and his evolution concepts.

### What is the response of the NCERT expert team to various media debates?

**Read here:** [NCERT Textbook team members write: Curriculum has been rationalised for the times](#)

### 92. [Ball Is In Courts – Bar councils’ argument that same-sex marriage is not SC matter goes against constitutional view of rights](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Ball Is In Courts – Bar councils’ argument that same-sex marriage is not SC matter goes against constitutional view of rights**” published in **The Times of India** on **25th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** Issues related to same-sex marriages

**News:** Recently, the Bar Council of India and state bar councils on asked the Supreme Court to avoid a decision in an ongoing hearing seeking legal recognition of same-sex marriages in India.

#### What is the reason behind the bar council demand?

The bar councils want the matter to be left to the legislature. This is because of the opinion that the law is essentially a codified societal norm reflecting the collective conscience of the people.

**Read more:** [Same-sex marriages: A matter for Parliament](#)

#### About the case and Centre’s affidavit on legalising Same-sex marriages in India

**Read here:** [Same-sex marriages can rock societal values: Centre](#)

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

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

#### Does the Constitution always support majoritarianism?

The Constitution is important in a democracy where the right to govern is decided by a parliamentary majority. But that does not mean that it always supports majoritarianism. For example, **a)** the triple talaq judgment of 2017 declared the practice illegal, and arguments of the “collective” wish of Muslim “communities” were rightly ignored, **b)** A constitutional bench struck down Section 377 of IPC and decriminalised consensual same-sex relations.

As a vision document, the Constitution is not constrained by social “norms” that usually change at a faster pace. Instead, it prioritises an individual’s fundamental rights.

The Constitution’s underlying principles are inconsistent with majoritarianism. It’s these constitutional principles that have protected laws aimed at social reforms against many social “norms”. For example, the Madras Temple Entry Authorisation Act, 1947, which opened access to all groups was upheld by the SC.

#### What does the Constitution say about the case on legalising same-sex marriages?

The Indian Constitution was ahead of its time. For instance, the universal adult franchise wholly ignored the regressive social views of that era. This is one of the Constitution’s greatest gifts. It needs to be nurtured. The ongoing hearing on same-sex marriages is a logical extension of that gift.

**Must read:** [Legalising Same-sex marriages in India and associated challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

93. [So, Are People The Best Judge?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “So, Are People The Best Judge?” published in **The Times of India** on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Polity – Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

**Relevance:** concerns associated with the Basic Structure Doctrine.

**News:** It has been 50 years of the “Basic Structure Doctrine”.

**How did the Basic Structure Doctrine emerge?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What changed after the judgment of Basic Structure Doctrine?**

The basic structure doctrine gave the **keys of the Constitution from the Parliament to the Supreme Court**.

Initially, the Parliament had power to amend the Constitution, which ensured that the will of the people prevail.

However, with the judgment, the power to determine the basic structure lies with the Supreme Court and not with the Parliament.

**What are the concerns with the Basic Structure Doctrine?**

**Read Here:** [50 years of Basic Structure Doctrine – Explained](#)

**This doctrine conceptualizes a very different idea of India from the one the Constitution sets out. It prevents future Indians from designing their future India** while the doctrine has no basis in the Constitution.

The doctrine has created tough competition between the **constitution and democracy**.

**For instance**, the SC with its power of basic structure tries to protect the democracy. However, when courts overreach in interpreting the Constitution, governments find new and ingenious ways to come out of it.

Hence, **the basic structure doctrine has not been able to serve its purpose and the tussle between the court and the Parliament still remains.**

94. [SCO meet highlights China’s growing role in Inner Asia, India’s challenge](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “SCO meet highlights China’s growing role in Inner Asia, India’s challenge” published in “The Hindu” on 26th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Regional groupings and agreements

**News-** SCO meeting of defence ministers is taking place in New Delhi this week.

**What are the internal contradictions in SCO?**

Its ability to cope with the **intra-state and inter-state conflicts** among the member states is now under scrutiny. Russia’s war in Ukraine is raising questions about Moscow’s capacity to **sustain primacy** in its backyard.

**China’s rise** is increasing the prospects for Beijing’s emergence as the **dominant force** in inner Asia.

There are **internal conflicts** in the SCO. There are serious conflicts between India and China, Delhi and Islamabad, as well as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

**Preventing conflict** between the member states and associates is a high priority for the SCO. But the forum’s record here is **not impressive**. Afghanistan’s internal instabilities have been a major driver for the SCO. But SCO was not able to play the role of the regional security arbiter. In January 2022, there was a major **internal upheaval in Kazakhstan**. It was not the SCO, but the Russian army that intervened to stabilize the situation.

There are issues between Central Asian regimes and Russia. Russian leaders have often dismissed Central Asian states as **artificial nations**.



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**Vladimir Putin's vision of the Russian world** underlines Moscow's special responsibility to protect Russian minorities beyond its formal borders. No Central Asian neighbour has endorsed the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Russia is deeply entrenched within the Central Asian state system with **strong ties to local elites and security establishments**. Many Central Asians work in Russia and send valuable remittances home.

After Ukraine, the Central Asian states are looking to intensify their **diversification strategies** to reduce their reliance on Russia.

Kazakhs talk about **"multi-vector diplomacy"**. Some regional actors are seeking to expand their influence in Russia's backyard. Turkey and Iran are two prime examples. There is also rising role of China in these countries

### **What are different viewpoints about China's growing influence in Central Asia?**

Some observers argue that **China's growing regional influence** will come at Russia's expense. Others point to the fact that Russia and China have drawn closer than ever before. They have little reason to quarrel over Central Asia.

**Moscow's muscle and Beijing's money** provide a sensible basis for their **strategic division of labor** in Central Asia. It will keep the Western powers out of the region.

A third argument agrees that China has no reason to replace Moscow as the **main power in Central Asia** in the near term. But it warns against underestimating Beijing's long-term ambitions in the region.

Beijing provides **explicit support to the sovereignty** of the Central Asian states. As per Chinese President Xi Jinping, China will continue to resolutely support Kazakhstan in protecting its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

### **What are options for India at SCO?**

Delhi's engagement with the SCO was premised on **Russian primacy** in the region and Moscow's support of **India's regional interests**. For India, a **strong and independent Russia** is critical for maintaining the **inner Asian balance**.

However, India is in no position to ensure **Moscow's strategic autonomy** from Beijing. That depends on **Russian strategic choices**.

India must now protect its own interests in SCO amidst a **rapidly changing regional power distribution** in China's favour.

### 95. [India's universities are coming apart, political class ignores damage caused by the exit of the ablest from the country](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "India's universities are coming apart, political class ignores damage caused by the exit of the ablest from the country" published in the "The Indian Express" on 26th April 2023.

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

**News-** The article explains the issue with academic leadership and governance challenges faced by Indian universities

### **What are issues with academic leadership in India?**

Appointment of academic leadership is guided by the expectation of **political allegiance**. There are few academics of **proven excellence** among the leadership appointments in India's public educational institutions.

Even the best leaders can achieve nothing if they are governed by **rigid externally set rules**. In India's higher education ecosystem, these rules appear mainly in the form of the **UGC guidelines**.

### **What are governance challenges faced by Indian universities?**

In India, **performance in teaching and research** is not subjected to a **professional review**. In the case of teaching, courses should be evaluated by students for content and delivery. They are a crucial means of assessing teaching. There is **absence of student evaluation**.

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**Research evaluation** is a more difficult task and existing methods remain contested. The current practice in India's universities based on the **UGC's Academic Performance Indicators (API) is flawed.**

**Scoring of publications** based on where a paper has been published is misleading for **judging the impact of research** on the **production of knowledge.**

Moreover, some of the activities counted under the API system are unnecessary. **Scoring of publications** puts a burden on India's universities in terms of time and resources.

A second area is **admission to courses of study and hiring of faculty.** Both student admission and faculty hiring requires a **minimum grade** and the **subject studied** for the previous degree. India's universities have **strict rules** on these matters. It causes **emigration of talent** to the universities of the West.

Many of India's public institutions are controlled by a **rule-bound bureaucracy** without the incentive to bring about a change.

**What is the way forward for improving the governance of Indian universities?**

The practice of **numerical scoring of research output** must be avoided for a more **holistic approach.**

**Global best practices** in the evaluation of academic performance are known. India should learn from the best aspects. It is the **rules governing research** rather than funding that is key to research output in Indian universities.

The UGC should leave this **matter of admission and faculty hiring** to academic bodies. There should be **external oversight** in the selection of faculty.

Universities are meant to engage in the **pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.** This requires an **unconditional commitment to free speech.** The university should not be made **hostage to the whims and ideologies of the state.**

Universities of the West have largely remained free of the state even when they receive public funds. It is the single most important reason for their success.

For the university, **neither infrastructure nor less stringent rules** can be a substitute for the **total freedom of expression.**

### 96. [Rescue service – The Sudan evacuation highlights challenges India faces in conflict](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Rescue service – The Sudan evacuation highlights challenges India faces in conflict”** published in **The Hindu** on **26th April 2023.**

**Syllabus:** GS – 2: Indian diaspora.

**Relevance:** About Sudan evacuation.

**News:** India has begun 'Operation Kaveri' to evacuate around 4,000 nationals currently stranded in Khartoum and other parts of Sudan.

**About the present issue in Sudan**

**Read here:** [Why are Sudan's army and paramilitary forces fighting each other?](#)

**About Operation Kaveri and Sudan evacuation**

**Read here:** [India launches Operation Kaveri to evacuate stranded citizens from war-hit Sudan](#)

**How India is coordinating with various countries in the Sudan evacuation?**

India has been coordinating efforts with other countries that have the most civilians and resources in Sudan. This includes the U.S., the U.K., the UAE and Saudi Arabia. These countries are coordinating on logistics, timing the evacuation operations, and even using Saudi and French planes.

The past experience of similar operations over the decades, beginning with the largest single civilian evacuation during the Gulf War in 1991 is helping in a quick evacuation.

**What India should learn from the Sudan evacuation?**

The Sudan evacuation once more highlights the particular challenges India faces in any conflict. -India has about 14 million non-resident Indians and more than seven million Indian tourists and travellers each year. So, there is practically no conflict today that does not affect an Indian citizen.

-Many NRIs are working in the most vulnerable jobs. For instance, nurses in Iraq or Yemen, students in Ukraine, labourers in Libya, Syria and Lebanon, etc.

**What should be done?**

Parliamentary Standing Committee for External Affairs, in 2022 recommended the government to form a standard operating procedure, and a special force to deal with such crises. This must be considered by the government. Further, the procedure must be devoid of political grandstanding or finger-pointing.

India is admired for its reputation and ability to harness its resources in rescuing every single citizen in crisis times. That reputation must be maintained.

97. [Bounty Is Curse – Sudan is another example of what happens to natural resource rich but politically mismanaged countries](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Bounty Is Curse – Sudan is another example of what happens to natural resource rich but politically mismanaged countries**” published in **The Times of India** on **27th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS-2: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests.

**Relevance:** About Sudan Civil War.

**News:** Sudan Civil War has highlighted the growing concern about regional instability.

**About the present issue in Sudan**

**Read here:** [Why are Sudan’s army and paramilitary forces fighting each other?](#)

**About Operation Kaveri and Sudan evacuation**

**Read here:** [India launches Operation Kaveri to evacuate stranded citizens from war-hit Sudan](#)

**What are the concerns associated with the Sudan Civil War?**

-If Sudan heads the Libya way, it will see another dangerous flood of weapons in the Horn of Africa region. Further, it will give a huge fillip to an assortment of armed groups, including ISIS and al-Qaida affiliates.

**How Dutch disease led to Civil War in Sudan?**

**Note:** *Dutch Disease in economics refers to a phenomenon wherein a country witnesses uneven growth across sectors due to the discovery of natural resources. This is because the chronic dependence on the export of these natural resources hollows out other sectors of the economy.*

Sudan Civil War is not just a straightforward power struggle between two branches of that country’s armed forces. It is also the expression of [Dutch disease phenomenon](#), which is afflicting multiple countries in Africa and beyond.

After South Sudan’s secession in 2011, Sudan’s economy was severely undermined by the loss of oil revenue which constituted more than 50% of the Sudanese government’s revenues and 95% of its exports. Thus, Sudan remains one of the poorest countries in the world with its 46 million people living on an average annual income of \$750 per capita.

Further, illegal extraction of natural resources by local warlords due to fragile governance-security structures is also there in Sudan,

**Read more:** [Rescue service – The Sudan evacuation highlights challenges India faces in conflict](#)

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### What should be done to come out of the Civil War?

Overall, failure to manage natural resources can have deep economic and security implications. In such conditions, the nation needs to take steps to come out of it. Such as Kazakhstan's National Fund which is financed by oil, gas and mineral revenues.

### 98. [Healthy reduction – Out-of-pocket health spends must fall faster](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Healthy reduction – Out-of-pocket health spends must fall faster**” published in the **Business Standard** on **27th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About National Health Accounts report and its findings.

**News:** The latest data from the National Health Accounts for 2019-20 suggests that India is witnessing a steady fall in the average out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE), or the amount patients spend themselves directly at the point of treatment.

### What are the key findings of the National Health Accounts report?

-From a high of 62.6% in 2014-15, OOPE fell to 47% in 2019-20.

-In the same period, government health expenditure rose from 29 to 41% of total healthcare expenditure.

-Private health insurance appears to have grown in this period, from 3.7 to 7%. Over a five-year timeline, this is a development in the right direction.

### What are the key observations of the National Health Accounts report findings?

There is a strong correlation between rising government health expenditure and falling OOPE. For example, the years between 2016-17 and 2017-18 saw an almost 10 percentage point drop in OOPE, in tune with an 8 percentage point rise in government expenditure.

Although the Ayushman Bharat scheme was introduced in the 2018-19 fiscal year, its impact on OOPE is yet to be determined.

**Read more:** [Out-of-pocket health spending still high, despite hike in government expenditure](#)

### What are the concerns associated with the National Health Accounts report?

**a)** The report figures pertain to the year before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. So, it is reasonable to assume that much has changed in the three years, given the nature of the virus, **b)** Although the OOPE has reduced, Indians still spend far too much from their own pockets to pay health expenses. For example, OOPEs as a percentage of total healthcare expenditure for countries such as Indonesia, China and Malaysia were around mid-30s, **c)** Central and state governments still underspend on healthcare. Government health expenditure as a percentage of GDP between 2014-15 and 2019-20 rose only marginally, from 1.13% to 1.35%. But the per capita spend nearly doubled from ~1,108 to ~2,014.

**Read more:** [Healthcare in India has made great progress, but challenges remain](#)

### What should be done to reduce OOPEs further?

The aim is to raise health expenditure to 2.5% of GDP by 2025, and the Central government has stayed on this path despite fiscal constraints. As of now, state spending is just 4-5% of their total budget. An increase in allocation by states would help in making an appreciable difference to OOPEs.

**Read more:** [\[Yojana March 2023 Summary\] India's post-pandemic healthcare system – Explained, pointwise](#)

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99. [Remission Impossible – In Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, govt decisions on early release, paroles are huge blows against justice](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Remission Impossible – In Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, govt decisions on early release, paroles are huge blows against justice**” published in **The Times of India** on **27th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS-2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

**Relevance:** About government’s flouting criminal justice procedures.

**News:** The existing Bihar Prison Manual has disallowed remission of convicts of terrorism, rape-cum-murder and murder of state officers. Bihar has recently amended the Bihar Prison Manual 2012 to remove the phrase “the murder of a public servant”. This facilitates the release of a murder convict for political reasons. This will also aid the criminalisation of politics.

**Read more:** [Remission or premature release of convicts: The injustice of exceptionalism](#)

**What are the other recent examples of government flouting criminal justice procedures?**

-The Supreme Court last week tightened up the Gujarat government and the Centre for their reluctance to share files on the early release of 11 lifers in the Bilkis Bano case for political reasons. The SC also remarked that the grant of remission showed “complete non-consideration for the gravity of the offences”.

-Recently, the Haryana government justified frequent paroles to Dera chief and rape-and-murder convict, claiming he wasn’t a “hardcore prisoner”.

**Read more:** [India’s battle for gender equality](#)

**What should be done?**

**Read more:** [Reviewing remission – SC should lay down norms for release of convicts on remission](#)

Remission if fairly applied is a chance at a second life. But, the government’s flouting criminal justice procedures are huge blows against justice.

100. [Poonch terror attack: It typifies the low-intensity conflict that Pakistan keeps persisting with](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Poonch terror attack: It typifies the low-intensity conflict that Pakistan keeps persisting with” published in the “The Indian Express” on 27th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance-** India and Pakistan bilateral relationship

**News** – Recently, five soldiers were killed in Poonch terrorist attack.

**What is Pakistan’s strategy in Jammu and Kashmir?**

The Pakistan strategy is **low-intensity conflict (LIC)**. It is characterised by **hybrid war**. Experience shows that there is little scope for a **clear-cut victory and defeat** in the low-intensity conflict in J&K.

A low-intensity conflict does not just disappear and provides **sufficient scope for a bounce back**. It is the people who ultimately decide their fate.

It need not be a Pulwama-type attack with dozens of fatalities. It is just something to **draw attention and an attempt to show the flag**.

**What is the immediate reason for the Poonch terror attack?**

**First**, is the **G20 Tourism Meeting at Srinagar** in the third week of May 2023. Pakistan’s aim is to **disrupt the event** and have it cancelled. The meet is an opportunity for India to showcase an **integrated J&K** to an important forum.

**Second**, and more complex event is the **SCO Foreign Ministers Meeting at Goa** on May 4-5. Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto accepted the invitation for this meeting

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There is speculation Sino-Pak may **collaborate to embarrass** India if New Delhi cancels the invitation due to the Poonch attack. If it does not, Bhutto can embarrass India by making **awkward statements on Indian soil**.

### **What is the way forward for security management in Jammu and Kashmir?**

India must not do anything in a hurry. Foreign policy has been **well-handled**, and no major decisions are required when there is an **international strategic turbulence**, and nothing major is at stake.

**Recalibration** to balance out the attention between the northern and western borders will ensure **greater pragmatism and the proper security focus**.

The strategic community and the media must assume a **larger and more pragmatic role** instead of pressuring the government into any hurried decisions.

Operationally, the **area south of Pir Panjal** perhaps needs a review in terms of the **density of troops**. The terrain, the target's proximity to the LoC and a mix of population keeps the area in a state of higher vulnerability.

### 101. [Virtual digital assets, India's stand and the way ahead](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Virtual digital assets, India's stand and the way ahead**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **27th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Governance

**Relevance:** Regulation of virtual digital assets

**News-** In a recent notification, the government extended the anti-money laundering provisions to virtual digital assets businesses and service providers.

#### **What are some facts about the notification?**

Virtual digital assets platforms will now have to register as a **reporting entity** with the Financial Intelligence Unit-India. The unit is the national agency to strengthen India's efforts against **money laundering and terror financing**.

Reporting entity platforms such as CoinSwitch are now mandated to **implement know your customer, record and monitor all transactions**, and report to the Financial Intelligence Unit-India when any suspicious activity is detected.

#### **Why is this a step in the right direction?**

Such rules are **already applicable** to banks, financial institutions and certain intermediaries in the securities and real estate markets. Extending them to virtual digital assets provides virtual digital assets platforms with a **framework to monitor and take actions** against malpractices.

A **standardisation of such norms** will make the Indian virtual digital assets sector **transparent**. It will also build **confidence and assurance** in the ecosystem. It will give the government **more oversight** on virtual digital asset transactions.

Such **risk-mitigation measures** are in line with **global guidelines** put forward by the International Monetary Fund and the [Financial Action Task Force](#).

Such guidelines acknowledge the role **Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASP)** play in **regulating and monitoring** the virtual digital assets ecosystem. VASPs are the most **efficient bridges and eyes for regulators** to effectively implement Anti-Money Laundering provisions.

This could also be the basis for India to reconsider its **tax treatment of virtual digital assets**. PMLA notification mitigates the most money laundering and terror financing risks. So, there is little reason for the **tax rates to be very high**.

There is an opportunity to bring virtual digital assets taxes **on a par with other asset classes**. Reducing tax rates will also help stem the **flight of capital, consumers, investments, and talent** and tackle the **grey economy for virtual digital assets**.

This is also significant due to India's presidency of the G-20. The finance track of the G-20 is discussing the establishment of a **global regulatory framework for virtual digital assets**. India's leadership and experience is key here.

There is also an opportunity to consider the **steps taken by other G-20 nations**. In Asia, Japan and South Korea have established a **framework to license VASPs**.

### 102. [The challenge of reviving a sense of fraternity](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “The challenge of reviving a sense of fraternity” published in “The Hindu” on 27th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Polity

**Relevance-** Ideals and principles contained in constitution

**News-** The article explains the importance of the principle of fraternity for Indian democracy.

#### **How did the ideas of the constitution take shape before independence?**

The Constitution of India was drafted by the Constituent Assembly. The idea was initially proposed in December 1934 by **M.N. Roy**.

It became an **official demand of the Indian National Congress in 1935** and was officially adopted in the **Lucknow session in April 1936** presided by Jawaharlal Nehru.

#### **What are Ambedkar ideas about fraternity?**

Fraternity means a sense of **common brotherhood** of all Indians. It is the principle which gives **unity and solidarity to social life**. It is a difficult thing to achieve.

Without fraternity, equality and liberty will not be very useful. Fraternity has been most forgotten in our Constitution and in our electoral process.

The idea of fraternity is closely linked to that of **social solidarity**, which is impossible to accomplish without **public empathy**.

#### **What are the duties in the Indian constitution that emanates from the principle of fraternity?**

The text of the Constitution explains the implication of other **principles and the duties arising** from them. But it is not the case with fraternity.

Article 51A evaded it except by **Article 51A(e)**. This article refers to the duty of every citizen to **promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood** amongst all the people of India.

As per Sir Ernest Barker, a distinction has to be made between the **psychological fact of common emotion and the political principle of fraternity**.

Fraternity is a **dubious word**. It may be used to denote **both emotion and principle**. But it is perhaps generally used to denote **emotion rather than principle**.

#### **What are Ambedkar’s ideas about working for democracy in India?**

Democracy is prone to **change form and purpose**. Its purpose in our times is the welfare **of the people**. It is a method of **government by discussion**. It brings **revolutionary changes** to the economic and social life of people without bloodshed.

Following are some of the requirements to maintain it:

- There must not be **inequalities in society**.
- There must be **equality of law as well as equal protection of law**, and observance of **constitutional morality**.
- There must be no **tyranny of the majority** over the minority.
- A functioning **moral order in society and a public conscience** are essential.

#### **What is the real situation of democracy in India?**

The ground reality is different. **Inequalities** continue to persist and so do those emanating from the caste system.

The **democratic opposition** has progressively declined in substance. **Equality in law** does not necessarily mean **equal protection of the law**. There is little regard for **constitutional morality**.

### What is the way forward for the success of democracy in India?

India has **immense diversity**. There is also an unfortunate legacy of violence at birth that persists and takes different forms. There is a need for **constitutional principles in individual and collective terms**.

A sense of fraternity is needed as an **essential virtue**. This cannot be merely in **formal terms**. It has to be **imbibed individually and collectively**. It has to be described as moral and **spiritual content**.

There is a need to invest in our democracy with this **moral content at the individual and collective levels**. It has to take the shape of an imperative.

### 103. [About setting up new nursing colleges: Why it is good to have more nurses](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**“Why it is good to have more nurses”** published in the **Indian Express** on **28th April 2023**.

**“Machines For Health – Policy emphasis on medical devices is welcome. But manufacturing needs many more industrial parks”** published in **The Times of India** on **28th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About setting up new nursing colleges and policy for medical devices.

**News:** Recently the government decided to set up 157 nursing colleges and announced a new policy for medical devices. The move will add more than 15,000 nursing seats.

#### About the government's decision

**Read here:** [Cabinet approves the Policy for the Medical Devices Sector](#)

#### What is the rationale behind new nursing colleges and policy for medical devices?

**Lack of nurses for population:** The WHO recommends three nurses for a population of 1,000 people. According to official estimates, India currently has less than two nurses for 1,000 people. A private report last year mentioned that the number of allied healthcare professionals needs to go up eight times to meet the country's needs in the next 25 years.

**Lack of enough investment:** China and India have roughly similar population sizes. India's medical technology market is about 20% of that in China. Moreover, only 15% of medical devices consumed here are made domestically.

#### What are the advantages of new nursing colleges and policy for medical devices?

**Address the skew in nursing colleges:** More than 40% of the country's nursing colleges are located in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are getting a major share of the new nursing colleges.

**Ensure enough manpower for new initiatives:** The government has been giving emphasis to setting up hospitals and medical colleges, including AIIMS, in many places to address regional imbalances. The private sector has also been increasing its footprint in the healthcare sector. These hospitals will require a regular supply of nurses.

**Enhance the revenue-generating capacity of potential migrants:** Migrant nurses have been, for many decades, a major source of remittance. These professionals are much sought after in hospitals in Europe, the Americas and West Asia. So, investing in nursing education will only enhance the revenue-generating capacity of Indians.

**Make medical devices affordable:** Getting policy, particularly making manufacturing right, will help in making healthcare more affordable. Any policy that increases the domestic scale and efficiency of diagnostic devices will address affordability issues in healthcare provision.

#### What more should be done?

**Ensure proper training:** a) India needs to equip these new nurses with enough skill sets required in a medical setup, b) India should facilitate proper communication training to avoid hostility between patients and healthcare professionals, c) India should equip caregivers with knowledge



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of the rapidly changing technologies in medical care, and **d)** Nursing institutes in the country currently do not provide nurses with adequate training to take up leadership positions. Hence, it should be provided.

**Collaborate with states:** The Centre at present support for four medical parks. But this is inadequate. Similarly, domestic manufacturing faces a challenge on account of high costs. All the challenges can be reduced if both states and the Centre work together to establish industrial parks for medical devices. With this, critical infrastructure expenses can be shared. The domestic market size in 2020 was \$11 billion. The government hopes that the medical devices policy will push it up to \$50 billion by 2030.

### 104. [What the wrestlers' protest says about power and politics in India](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "What the wrestlers' protest says about power and politics in India" published in the "The Indian Express" on 28th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

**Relevance-** Issues related to women sports person

**News-** The top national- and international-level wrestlers to once again sit on a protest dharna at Jantar Mantar. They are accusing the WFI President of sexual harassment of women players.

**What are the issues faced by women sports persons that are depicted by the current events?**

The State and its agencies are the **biggest violators of the law**, especially the laws enacted to ensure the rights of women.

The obstacles faced in initiating the **process of seeking justice** are so daunting that the majority opt out after their initial efforts.

There is **blatant misuse of official position** and **use of muscle power** by the accused to intimidate and silence those speaking up.

There is a **lack of political will** to implement the law on the part of the state. This ensures that justice is **neither certain, nor speedy and almost denied**. The result is that perpetrators of violence against women are never punished.

It highlights the situation in the **institutional set up** of the Wrestling Federation of India.

The **top sports bodies** in India are dominated by politicians or their scions. The violators use their **political clout** to bully the complainants into silence.

There are **threats to life, character assassination and everyday harassment and disrespect** for women sports persons who file complaints. This is in clear violation of the **2013 POSH Act and Vishaka Guidelines**.

When complaints lodged by international players meet with such a fate, it gives the **wrong signal** to remain silent to other women who suffer such violation of their rights.

### 105. [Darwin must stay in Indian school textbooks](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "**Darwin must stay in Indian school textbooks**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **28th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** Issues related to pedagogy and curriculum

**News-** The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) dropped Darwin's theory from the examination syllabus for Class 9 and 10 students in the academic year 2021-22 Darwin's theory explains the origin of human beings.

**Why are the shortcomings in our approach to teaching Darwin theory?**

The first thing that is neglected is the **influence of other people** on Darwin.

Darwin was strongly influenced by **geologist Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology**. Lyell studied glaciers, volcanoes and fossils, and proposed the concept of "**gradual geological change**". Geological objects today result from minute changes accumulating over a period of time.

**Lamarck, the French naturalist** proposed his own **theory of evolution** before Darwin. It also portrayed evolution as a process that included accumulation of changes over time. Darwin seems to invoke the same **Lamarckian theory of use and disuse**.

Darwin was influenced by **social beliefs of his times**. Darwin's theory was an **extension of laissez-faire economics**. The term was conceived by economist Adam Smith and developed by Thomas Malthus. It referred to self-interest and free competition in the marketplace.

Malthus also propounded a theory of population in 1798. He claimed that humans compete for limited resources until a catastrophic event leads to a decline in their population.

Darwin was greatly influenced by **Malthus' ideas of competition** in an environment with limited resources. Thus, only those living beings survive that carry variations that give them an edge over others.

Another grave omission in the teaching of the theory of evolution is the **consequent use of his theory** both by others and Darwin himself.

For instance, Herbert Spencer's idea of "survival of the fittest", proposed in 1864, coalesced eventually into a philosophy called "**social Darwinism**".

In his later book, ***The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex***, Darwin claimed that men have evolved to be naturally more intelligent since they have had to continuously use their mental power.

**Why must students and teachers in school concern themselves with the above aspects of Darwin's theory?**

These examples carry **crucial insights** into science in both the **historical and contemporary world**.

Science is shaped by the **social and cultural beliefs** of its times, to which it also actively contributes.

These examples remind us that science is a **messy affair** that requires **caution alongside curiosity, creativity and imagination**.

#### 106. [Why Pratap Bhanu Mehta is wrong about social justice politics and caste census](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article "**Why Pratap Bhanu Mehta is wrong about social justice politics and caste census**" published in the "**The Indian Express**" on **29th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2 – Government policies for vulnerable sections of society

**Relevance**– Issues related to caste politics

**News**– The article challenges the ideas represented by Pratap Bhanu Mehta Mehta in his article "**Mirage of social justice**" in **Indian Express**.

**What are the P.B. Mehta arguments against social justice?**

Social justice enhances "**social divisions**". The social justice discourse has focused too much on the **distribution of public resources based on caste identities**.

He calls for recognising the **ethical issues of discrimination** and creating **effective institutions** to address caste inequities.

Mehta terms the Opposition uniting around social justice as a politically unwise idea. It may bring **short-term gains but undermine long-term goals**.

**What are counterpoints to P.B. Mehta arguments against social justice?**

Caste-based oppression creates **material conditions**. This materiality of caste inequality is produced in **economic, socio-cultural and political areas** through **electoral-political machinations**.

Social justice has relevance because of **increasing poverty** and disturbing **trends of inequality**. Marginalisation of groups neglected for hundreds of years can be a **fulcrum for unity amongst opposition parties**.

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The most basic understanding of social justice is the struggle for **equitable division of opportunities, privileges and larger representation in institutions.**

The denial of social justice in India is largely a product of the **ideology of Hindutva.** It portrays caste as a **troubling but natural aspect** of Indian society. It is denied by policy neglect and political silence.

### **What is the dominant discourse on caste in India?**

The dominant discourse on caste in India has been characterised by a reluctance to acknowledge the **scale and severity of caste-based violence and discrimination.** The failure to recognise caste injustice is a product of a **wider culture of denial and impunity.**

The dominant discourse on caste proposes that **universal remedies** like creating effective institutions can address caste injustices. Often, these remedies are proposed by voices that lack self-reflexivity on their own caste privilege.

**Quotas and reservations** that provide opportunities for **historically disadvantaged communities** are perceived as a form of **reverse discrimination** by members of dominant castes. It shows the lack of a **sense of social justice** and displays an **exaggerated sense of entitlement.**

### **How can the dominant discourse on caste be challenged?**

Countering the dominant discourse on caste needs a **sustained and concerted effort to raise awareness** about the **realities of oppression.** There is a need to **challenge the impunity** of those who perpetrate caste-based violence and discrimination in various forms.

The political neglect of **caste-based inequalities** can only be countered by a **recognition of its historical and political dimensions.** **Political commitment** is necessary to challenge the **structural barriers** that create caste-based oppression.

**Electoral politics** is the arena where **majoritarian politics** has to be challenged, resisted and defeated.

There is a need to challenge the **culture of members of dominant castes**, who are often in **positions of power and influence.** They propose **universal remedies** and deride social justice as merely a slogan without acknowledging their own caste-based privilege.

As per a section of the ruling elite supported by the mainstream media, caste census shall **lead to casteism.** Such fear-mongering needs to be addressed **philosophically and by citing the data.**

### 107. [Two-sided triangle – on Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\) ministerial summit](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Two-sided triangle**” published in **Business Standard** on **29<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

#### **Syllabus: GS 2 – India and its Neighborhood – Relations**

**Relevance:** Comprehensive National Power (CNP) of India, Pakistan and China

**News:** The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) ministerial summit is going on in Delhi. India, Pakistan and China are its members among others.

The article discusses **Comprehensive National Power (CNP)** of each of the three countries post-2014 decade.

#### **What is CNP?**

CNP takes into account a combination of a lot of factors such as the size and growth of the economy, the strength and cohesion of society, and the firepower and quality of the military, to trade and soft power.

CNP is also defined by how a nation affects their friends, adversaries, and neighbours.

#### **How is the CNP of Pakistan?**

**Pakistan is today the weakest** it's been since the eve of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The economy is bankrupt, and the **growth rate for this year is only 0.5 percent.**

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The income gap between Pakistan and not just India, but all of the Subcontinent, is widening. It's ruled by a coalition government.

Further, **Pakistan's support for Taliban and its ideological victory in Afghanistan has left it without any support from other countries.**

Even, **the Gulf Arabs have moved on** from their commitment have no patience for Pakistan and its demands.

Due to this, **Pakistan is now merely a vassal state of China.** It now has to compete with other powerful vassal state of China such as Russia.

Hence, Pakistan is left with only one card to play, **i.e., India.** It keeps the Indian military engaged along the western borders which is valuable to China.

**How is the CNP of China compared to India?**

**China has witnessed growth in almost all the areas** including technology, trade, military power, social cohesion and rising global stature.

This has enabled **China to close the gap with the US and the larger Western power, and increase the gap with the rest, especially India.** Further, the war in Ukraine has made Russia more dependent on China.

Whereas, **India on no parameters of CNP have narrowed the gap with China.**

India has grown phenomenally in many areas, but the inherited gap is too much with China, that even if India grows faster now, the distance between the two will increase.

**China's economy is more than five times India's** and even if Chinese growth slows down to less than half of India's, the gap will still rise.

China has also stretched India's militarily along both frontiers and India has no option except to deploy its military along the borders.

However, **India's CNP when compared to the previous years has improved.** India's is a remarkable success story of a country becoming so enormously powerful long before it became rich.

**Must Read:** [SCO meet highlights China's growing role in Inner Asia, India's challenge](#)

**What is the way ahead for India?**

**India faces a strategic challenge of the triangulation between China and Pakistan.**

Therefore, India needs to take efforts to close its growing gap with China while defending itself from China and Pakistan.

### 108. [The women's reservation Bill cannot wait any longer](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "**The women's reservation Bill cannot wait any longer**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **29th April 2023.**

**Syllabus:** GS2- Polity

**Relevance:** Women in politics

**News-** It is disheartening to witness that even 75 years after Independence, Parliament lacks substantial representation of women, with women holding just 14% of the seats.

**What are the contributions of women in the field of politics?**

Women played a crucial role in India's fight for independence, by organising demonstrations, leading rallies, and raising awareness. There were **numerous female representatives** in the Constituent Assembly as well.

Just a decade ago, three of India's largest States, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh, were in the spotlight for being **led by women Chief Ministers.**

While Sushma Swaraj led the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Sonia Gandhi served as both President of the Congress Party and Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance. Also, India had its **first woman President**, Pratibha Patil around the same time.

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### **What have been the major developments in India related to women representation in politics?**

The discourse on women's reservation in India originates from the **pre-Independence era**. Several women's organisations demanded **political representation for women**.

In 1955, a **government appointed committee** recommended that **10% of seats** in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies should be reserved for women.

During the 1980s, the demand for women's reservations gained momentum. The **National Perspective Plan for Women (1988)** recommended that **30% of seats** in all elected bodies should be reserved for women.

This recommendation was reiterated in the **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women**, which was adopted in 2001.

In 1993, the **Panchayati Raj Act** was amended to **reserve 33% of all seats** in local government bodies for women.

In 1996, the **Women's Reservation Bill** was introduced in the Lok Sabha. The Bill proposed to reserve one third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State legislative Assemblies for women. However, facing strong opposition from some political parties.

It gained more momentum again in the early 2000s. On March 9, 2010, the Bill was approved in the Rajya Sabha.

### **What are the global examples of women representation in politics?**

Around the world, women leaders are **outperforming their male counterparts**.

The **Scandinavian countries** have implemented policies and governance structures that support **gender equality and women's empowerment**. It includes **women's representation in political and leadership positions**.

Moreover, countries led by women have **best policies and governance practices**. The deep scars in Rwanda, from the genocide, are being healed by a leadership that comprises women. This has also resulted in **key social reforms**.

Norway implemented a quota system in 2003 that required 40% of seats on corporate boards to be occupied by women.

### **What is the way forward for proper representation of women in politics?**

Babasaheb Ambedkar was of the opinion that the progress of a community can be measured by the **degree of progress which women have achieved**.

Women have been waiting for too long for their **right to govern**. Women's leadership qualities are not hidden from anyone. So, the **denial of opportunity for political representation** represents grave injustice.

As India strives to become a Vishwa Guru, it can not overlook the **pivotal role women can play in nation building and development**. The **women's reservation Bill** must be passed.

### 109. [Mann Ki Baat: A conversation that millions of Indians look forward to](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "Mann Ki Baat: A conversation that millions of Indians look forward to" published in "The Indian Express" on 29th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Polity and Governance

**Relevance-** Public communication by leadership

**News-** Pm Modi is going to address the 100th episode of Maan Ki Baat programme.

### **Why has the medium of radio been chosen by PM Modi for the exchange of his ideas?**

Radio is an **intimate story-telling medium**. There cannot be a more **potent instrument** for **exchange of ideas** between the country's Prime Minister and the people of his country.

AIR's reach is also large, with about 600 channels carrying the programme.

Many world leaders have realised the power of radio — [Winston Churchill](#), Franklin Roosevelt and other presidents of the United States of America.

### What is the importance of the Maan Ki Baat programme?

Youth, especially students and lifestyle issues of our competitive times have been a regular focus of Mann Ki Baat. The Prime Minister had dedicated one complete episode in February 2016 to the topic of facing exams in a **stress-free manner**.

People who faced **tremendous pressure themselves and excelled**, such as [Sachin Tendulkar](#), Viswanathan Anand and CNR Rao, featured in this episode. They gave valuable, simple tips to students.

The Prime Minister went on to write the **best-selling book, Exam Warriors**, on the same topic. These turned into bestselling books for students.

From the girl child to student stress, from cleanliness to coming out of depression, the Prime Minister has often utilised Mann Ki Baat as a platform to make society speak to itself by speaking to him.

**Mann Ki Baat and Swachh Bharat** are connected in more ways than one. Swachh Bharat was launched on October 2, 2014, and the first episode of Mann Ki Baat went on air the very next day, on October 3, 2014.

For PM, Mann Ki Baat has been one of the most important platforms in strengthening the **cleanliness mission** and making it a more **people-driven movement**.

### 110. [How to make India pandemic proof](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “How to make India pandemic proof” published in “The Indian Express” on 29th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Issues relating to development and management of health

**Relevance-** Issues related to pandemic

**News-** Covid19 has exposed the weaknesses in the world’s health systems.

#### What are the pandemic threats for the world?

Climate change is giving rise to **new pathogens**. **Zoonotic diseases** are spilling over from animals to humans, causing over a million deaths each year.

A silent pandemic is waiting to happen. It is **antibiotic resistance**.

#### What are steps taken by India to prepare itself for the next pandemic?

In October 2021, India launched its flagship programme to prevent, prepare and respond to pandemics. It is the **Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)**.

It seeks to fill the **gaps in health systems and institutions** at both the national and state level. It will need to be **overseen at the highest levels**.

India has also brought several ministries — including health, animal husbandry, forests, and biotechnology — under the Principal Scientific Advisor. This was one of the major shortcomings during the pandemic.

More recently, the foundation for the **National Institute for One Health** in Nagpur was laid. The institute will identify **hotspots for endemic and emerging zoonotic diseases**.

India is now **augmenting surveillance** in 20 cities. Municipal corporations are mandated to identify the most vulnerable areas and provide early alerts. India is also expanding its **network of research laboratories** to cover all **respiratory viruses of unknown origin**.

After the 2015 MERS outbreak, South Korea used **mobile technology and Big Data** to trace contacts and built a strong capacity for diagnosis. India has also begun these exercises.

The clinical trial network set up under the **National Biopharma Mission** is a positive step toward improving **access to affordable new vaccines and drugs**. Similarly, the ICMR’s initiative to establish a **biorepository for clinical samples** will be a national and global asset.

#### What is the way forward to counter the threat of future pandemic?

The need of the hour is a holistic **“One Health” approach** that addresses the health of people, animals and ecosystems together.

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The rise of new pathogens has highlighted the **importance of genomic surveillance**. There is a need for wider testing of wastewater and samples from incoming ships and aircraft. These surveillance systems will also need to be extended to other South Asian countries.

**Antibiotic resistance** will have to be tracked and **powerful awareness campaigns** are needed to promote their rational use.

For surveillance, private hospitals and clinics will need to be brought under a **common platform** and data placed in the public domain. The **Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission** can facilitate this.

In villages, **strong partnerships** will be needed with communities, dairy cooperatives, and the poultry industry to identify new infections.

During the pandemic, Indian manufacturers produced vaccines, test kits, therapeutics, masks and other items at very **competitive prices**. The **partnerships** between research bodies and manufacturers will need to be **sustained and enhanced**.

### 111. [None too soon: On Governor's and the judiciary's reminder on Bills](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**None too soon: On Governor's and the judiciary's reminder on Bills**” published in **The Hindu** on **29th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the challenges associated with the power of the governor.

**News:** The Supreme Court has reminded Governors that the Constitution expects that a decision to return a Bill to the State Assembly for reconsideration should be made “as soon as possible”.

#### **About the case**

The Telangana Governor's apparent inaction on several Bills made the State to approach the Court.

In the meantime, the Bills have been cleared by the Governor. Based on this, the Court disposed of the petition. But kept open questions that arose from the issue for consideration in an appropriate case.

#### **About the SC's remarks on the governor's power to return a Bill**

The expression ‘as soon as possible’ contains significant constitutional content and must be borne in mind by constitutional authorities.

This effectively means it would be constitutionally impermissible for Governors to hold on to Bills indefinitely without communicating their decision to the House.

The Court's observation addresses the issue of delay, but it does not address the issue in granting assent.

**Read more:** [The question of justiciability of the Governor's assent to Bills in India](#)

#### **What are the concerns associated with the powers of the Governor in India?**

**Note:** *The Governor have the discretionary power to withhold assent or return a Bill for reconsideration. In the Constituent Assembly, it was explicitly clarified that returning a Bill was to be done only on advice.*

-There are three clear problems associated with **Article 200**, which deals with assent to Bills. Such as **a)** there is an absence of a time limit for acting on Bills, **b)** The scope for reserving a Bill for the President's consideration against the advice of the Cabinet and **c)** The claim that the Governor can kill any Bill by declining assent.

-**Article 163** (Discretionary power) evades the primary rule that the Governors function on the ‘aid and advice’ of the Cabinet. Further, there is also a clause that prohibits any inquiry into whether a particular matter fell within their discretion or not.

These provisions give abundant scope for conflict between the government and Governor's office.

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

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### What should be done?

These rules should be changed, either by amending the Constitution or through an appropriate Supreme Court verdict. So that misuse of discretion can be kept in check.

### 112. [Wrestling Injustice – Protests are integral to a democracy – and vital](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Wrestling Injustice – Protests are integral to a democracy – and vital**” published in **The Times of India** on **29th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population.

**Relevance:** Issues related to women sports persons.

**News:** The top national and international-level wrestlers are once again protesting to express their dissatisfaction with the sexual harassment complaints from women players.

### About the issue

**Read here:** [Wrestlers in SC against Delhi Police: What the law says about filing of FIR in sexual harassment cases](#)

### What does the wrestlers’ protest say about power and politics in India?

**Read more:** [What the wrestlers’ protest says about power and politics in India](#)

### Are protests legal in India?

Protests are inherent to democracy. No grievance redressal mechanism can be perfect. In a democratic framework, a protest is the default option to express deep dissatisfaction.

A protest is a symptom of an underlying problem. It also acts as a pressure relief valve.

### What should be done?

Indian Olympic Association president PT Usha, said that the wrestlers protesting in public are sully the image of the country.

Protests don’t affect a country’s image. So, the IOA should make a sincere effort to understand wrestlers’ fear and address the issue.



# General Studies Paper – 3

General Studies - 3

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1. [India's fossil fuel lessons for net zero](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**India’s fossil fuel lessons for net zero**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **3rd April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

**News**– India has faced many challenges in creating self-sufficiency. The same practices should not be repeated in the case of renewable energy.

**What are the challenges India faced in the case of hydrocarbon and how can they be used as lessons for renewable energy?**

**1) Challenges in accessing indigenous resources**– Although, India had the raw material of oil and gas. But the hydrocarbon resources are located in harsh terrain and complex geology. Which were difficult to **locate** and even if located, they were difficult to produce on a **commercial basis**. The reason is the **high cost of drilling and development**.

Similarly, it is difficult to create a world class hub for the manufacture of batteries, solar cells, wafers and modules, on the basis of availability of technical talent and capital. Process cost, due to land acquisition, erratic supplies of water and power and legal redress, needs to be minimised.

**2) Issue with use of technology**– The **recovery rate of oil and gas** from India’s producing fields has averaged between 25-30%, compared to world average of 40-60 per cent. it is not due to access to Enhanced oil recovery technologies. The reason is the **utilisation of these technologies, which is not** efficiently implemented.

Therefore, clean energy sector should not take the availability of tech as manufacturing competitiveness. China’s dominance in PV solar cell manufacturing is because, its engineers have been successful in implementation of the several technological steps, required to convert raw material into an end product, efficiently.

**3) Incentive model**– The **exploration sector** was liberalised in the expectation of more foreign investment. But, international companies shown lack of interest, stating **our geology as high risk**. India **fiscal and commercial terms** were not **internationally competitive** for them.

A similar disappointment is possible in case of the **PLI scheme for clean energy sector**. This is because the incentives offered are small compared to the benefits provided by the US through the “**inflation reduction act**” and Europe through its “**net zero industry act**”.

The US offers, for instance, subsidies up to \$10 billion or single factories. It is equivalent to total subsidy under PLI. Therefore, India cannot compete on the size of the incentive package with advanced economies. The focus should instead be to lower entry barriers, ease business conditions.

**4) External dependence**– Finally, India remains **dependent on the external market** for supplies of petroleum. There is no easy solution to reverse this imbalance and address its vulnerability to **unexpected supply disruptions**. However, The government has successfully diversified its supplies without involving in domestic or regional politics and conflicts.

Similarly, clean energy minerals and components are internationally available. Instead of creating **high-cost, domestic, clean energy hub dependent upon subsidies, government should strengthen the trading relationship with exporting countries**.

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### 2. [The Bharat 6G vision document: how India plans to lead telecommunication tech](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The Bharat 6G vision document: how India plans to lead telecommunication tech**” published in **The Hindu** on **3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Science and Technology

**Relevance:** About 6G Vision Document

**News:** The Prime Minister of India has recently unveiled the Bharat 6G Vision Document.

**Why did the government put out a 6G vision document?**

**Assuming Leadership:** The government wants to increase India’s dominance in wireless data usage and take the **lead in establishing 6G standards globally**.

It will be done through encouraging local manufacturing of telecom, supporting Indian companies and engineers in international discussions around standardization.

**Avoiding Delays:** The government doesn’t want to delay or stay behind the other countries in rolling out 6G as it did in 5G. **For instance**, 5G came in India years after countries like South Korea and the United States started using it.

**Addressing the Demand:** Frequencies increase in newer generations of networks. Hence, with the advent of 5G and 6G technologies, lower frequencies in 4G networks may not be able to match the demand for traffic.

Therefore, the government is focusing on 6G to address the demand and make people have access to better frequencies.

**Developing R&D:** The government wants to support research in the field of 6G technologies. It will be done through **leveraging talent in academia and companies. An apex body will be set up** to guide these groups through roadblocks.

**Achieve connectivity goals:** 6G technology will help the government in achieving connectivity goals.

**For instance**, ensuring that **every person has access to a minimum of 100 Mbps of broadband**, giving every **gram panchayat access to half a terabit** per second of connectivity, and **installing over 50 million internet devices across the nation**—13 per square kilometer.

**Must Read:** [Telecom secretary asks C-DoT to work on 6G, launches Quantum Communication Lab](#)

**How are other countries approaching 6G?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**Japan and Germany are working together** from fundamental technologies to demonstrations on 6G technology.

**What will be the benefit of 6G and what are the associated concerns?**

**6G will make websites load faster, videos to look better, and files to download faster than the 5G technology.** However, businesses and governments are still figuring out how to best use 5G technology.

Further, **the vision document states that** satellite constellations will connect to base stations and telecom towers, thereby integrating networks and expanding them into rural areas.

However, solutions to provide connectivity to rural areas already exist in other forms. **For instance**, satellite internet in remote areas can be provided by instantly granting **administrative clearance to firms like** Elon Musk’s SpaceX and Bharti Airtel-backed OneWeb.

Hence, with the advent of satellite technologies, providing internet connectivity to rural areas is no longer a constraint.

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### 3. [Bot's The Problem – On the issue of Artificial Intelligence](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Bot's The Problem**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **3rd April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT, computers and robotics

**Relevance**– Issues related to applications of AI

**News**– Italy has temporarily suspended ChatGPT for data breach. It will further investigate Open AI, the maker of ChatGPT, on its data collection practices as per the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018.

#### **Why is there a need to regulate the applications of AI?**

An AI-focused ethics group in the US demanded to investigate OpenAI for **violating consumer protection rules**.

Microsoft has **integrated ChatGPT** in its search to find popular applications worldwide. It has raised **multiple ethical and legal concerns** and has shown the ChatGPT's ability to produce **mass misinformation**.

There is a need to **protect fundamental rights** in relation to **biometric applications** such as emotion recognition where machines recognise human emotions, and **AI polygraphs** where machines detect deception by individuals.

The advanced tech has **seamlessly integrated** into our lives without our recognition of their impacts. A few companies control our use of the internet, which still holds the promise of being a **democratic space**.

### 4. [Long on intent: On India's Foreign Trade Policy](#)

**Source**: The post is based on the following articles

“**Harmonize trade policy with India's broad goals**” and “**Our foreign trade policy bets on e-commerce for an export jump**” published in the **Livemint** on **3rd April 2023**.

“**Long on intent: On India's Foreign Trade Policy**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS – 3: changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance**: About new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP).

**News**: Recently, India's commerce minister unveiled a new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP).

#### **What are the salient features of India's new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP)?**

**Read here:** [Foreign Trade Policy 2023 announced](#)

#### **How this new FTP is different from previous ones?**

**No expiry date**: India's previous FTP was meant for a five-year span and it has ended in March 2020. But, the new FTP has no expiry date and is open to change.

**No new schemes, except the amnesty scheme**: While earlier FTPs launched new schemes and incentives, this FTP is a deviation. This is because a number of India's export-linked subsidies were challenged by the US as prohibited subsidies under the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures.

India lost the case at the WTO in 2019 and had to withdraw these subsidies or replace them with WTO-compliant supports like the [Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products \(RoDTEP\) Scheme](#), which replaced the previous [Merchandise Exports from India Scheme \(MEIS\)](#).

**Shift in approach**: The new FTP tries to move away from an incentive-based regime towards creating an enabling ecosystem for Indian exporters. There has been a focus on the ease of doing business and facilitating the integration of Indian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with global value chains.

### **What are the significant advantages of the new FTP?**

**Renewed push for a competitive edge overseas:** The policy aims to align Indian exports with a big global e-commerce opportunity within World Trade Organization (WTO) rules.

**Ensured many micro-reforms:** This includes online approvals for various schemes, automation of some processes, removal of export obligations for items that go into climate action, etc. Most of these schemes including the RoDTEP , [RoSCTL \(Rebate on State and Central Taxes and Levies\)](#), AA (Advance Authorisation) and [EPCG \(Export Promotion Capital Goods\)](#) have just been tweaked. All this will ease exports and support major sectors like dairy, textiles and apparel, etc.

**Export push to the e-commerce sector:** This sector received substantial attention in FTP 2023 because of the sector's potential to help India to attain its export targets of \$1 trillion for goods and services by 2030.

### **What are the challenges India needs to address?**

**Export promotion does not work well with import restrictions:** India's 'Make in India' aims to help local players exploit wider opportunities. In view of protecting the home base from global rivalry India still imposes many import tariffs. But, being pro-trade by trying to push exports and deter imports can pose great challenges as well.

**The issue with the non-expiry policy:** The non-expiry policy will grant flexibility to the government. But the Centre may term this as 'policy instability' in long run due to non-updation, especially to the changing needs of the China-plus value chains strategy.

**Issues with E-commerce value limit:** The policy proposes to increase the value limit for exports from ₹5 lakhs to ₹10 lakhs per consignment. This is a deterrent for exporters to use the e-commerce mode for exports of high-value consignments in sectors like gems and jewellery, handicrafts, handmade carpets and electronics.

**Fails to provide roadmap:** The FTP falls short in offering more substantive and sectorally targeted measures as well as a well-defined roadmap to meet the 2030 export target.

### **What needs to be done?**

**Remove value limit for e-commerce:** To reach the e-commerce export target of \$200-300 billion, there should not be any value limit, as has been the practice in most of India's competing countries.

**Interlink infotech systems across government departments:** The new FTP did not specify the need to link the IT system of customs with that of partner government agencies like the Drug Controller General of India or FSSAI for import clearances of express/courier consignments. This is a necessity to **a)** facilitate the fast-track mobility of consignments, **b)** create a robust risk management system for end-to-end clearances.

**Need data to promote district-level exports:** It is important to have data/information on what kinds of goods and services are being produced in the districts and which of these have export potential. Hence, there is a need for an institutional mechanism to collect data to map food and other products from different districts.

India's isolation from the world economy has long proven a failure. As a major economy, India still punches far below its weight in world trade. Hence, the success of the new FTP is vital to improve India's stake in the world economy.

5. [The case for an inequality boom in India is greatly exaggerated](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The case for an inequality boom in India is greatly exaggerated**” published in **Mint** on **4<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Inclusive Growth**

**Relevance:** **arguments against rising inequality**

**News:** Income-tax data has been placed before the Parliament. Data provides that inequality in India has increased due to the pandemic, GST, etc. The article provides a counter argument against it.

**What are the views against increasing inequality?**

**First,** Individuals whose **taxable income is less than ₹2.5 lakh are not required to file tax returns**, unless they need a refund of any tax which may have been deducted at source.

Thus, any changes observed in the pattern of the tax base in the ‘Under ₹5 lakh’ group cannot be used to measure the impact of the pandemic or other policies on the most vulnerable sections of Indian society.

**Second,** there has been a significant increase (13%) in the number of taxpayers in the lower-income group from 2016-17 to 2018-19. Another 11% increase was witnessed in 2018-19.

This increase was caused due to **the use of GST data, a crackdown on black-money post demonetization and the adoption of sophisticated technology by the income tax department.**

Therefore, if there would have been impact of GST and demonetization, the taxpayers would have decreased instead of increasing.

**Recommendations of the 7th pay commission** were also implemented in 2016-17. This caused increase in the number of government employees and pensioners in the overall taxpayer base.

**Third,** growth in the low-income group of taxpayers declined in 2019-20 and dropped further in 2020-21.

It is argued that decline was caused due to the demonetization and GST. However, it was **more due to an economic slowdown caused by stress in non-banking finance companies in 2019-20.**

Further, the drop of over 7% in the ‘Under ₹5 lakh’ category in 2019-20 could have also been **due to some changes in the individual tax regime.**

**For instance,** A new provision of tax rebate of 100% tax for those earning below ₹5 lakh with standard deduction of ₹50,000 was introduced in 2018-19.

All these changes may have had a spillover effect in 2020-21.

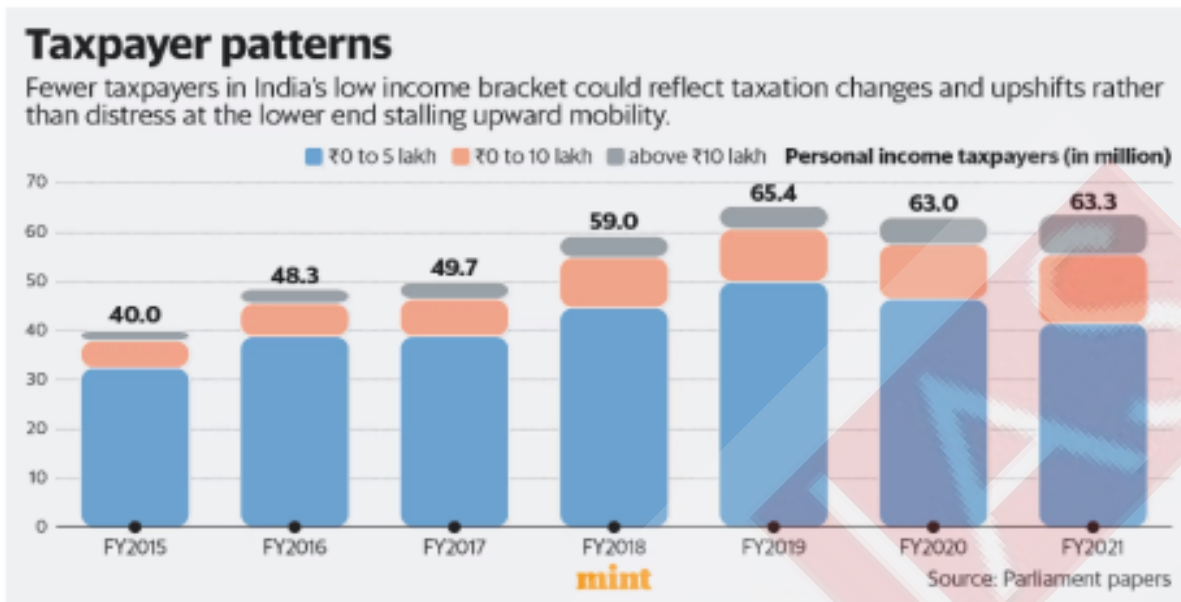
**Fourth,** the decline in the number of taxpayers in the lower-income group in 2020-21 should not be seen in isolation, i.e., all the changes need not mean taxpayers fell below the taxable income threshold.

They may have **shifted to the next slab of ₹5-10 lakh** which saw a 20% growth to 3 million despite the pandemic.

**Fifth,** the [Gini coefficient for Brazil falls when fiscal transfers such as health and education assistance](#) are taken into consideration. Similarly, it also falls for the US when federal taxes and transfers are included.

Therefore, India’s social security net is vast and expanding. When the Gini coefficient for India is calculated, it is likely to yield a lower estimate of income inequality.

**Must Read:** [Tackle The Four Trojan Horses Of Inequality](#)



Source: Mint

#### 6. [Time to put a price on carbon emissions](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Time to put a price on carbon emissions” published in “The Hindu” on 4th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environment

**Relevance-** Issues related to climate change

**News-** The article explains the pricing carbon strategy to fight climate change.

#### **What are the different ways of pricing carbon?**

The **establishment of a carbon tax** domestically. Examples are Korea and Singapore.

The **use of an emissions trading system**. It is prevalent in the European Union and China.

The application of an **import tariff on the carbon content**. The EU is proposing it.

#### **Why has the carbon tax not been successful in fighting climate change?**

Around 46 countries price carbon at an **average price of only \$6 a ton of carbon**. It covers **only 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions**, and a fraction of the estimated harm from the pollution.

The IMF has proposed price floors of \$75, \$50, and \$25 a ton of carbon for the United States, China, and India, respectively. It believes this could help achieve a **23% reduction in global emissions by 2030**.

#### **What are the benefits of carbon pricing?**

The **economy-wide benefits** of carbon pricing generally are more than the cost it imposed on individual industries in the EU, British Columbia, Canada, and Sweden.

Carbon pricing makes **investment in renewable energy** such as solar and wind more attractive.

#### **What is the scenario of implementation of carbon tax in India?**

Carbon tax is a **good option** for India. It can directly **discourage fossil fuels**. It will lead to generation of **more revenue** which can be invested in cleaner sources of energy.

It can replace the **petroleum taxes** which are not directly aimed at emissions.

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In India, **fiscal policy** has established the **basic structures** needed to implement a carbon tax. For example, they can be integrated into **road fuel taxes**. India could start with the **IMF figure of \$25 a ton**.

### **What are challenges in implementation of carbon tax and how to manage them?**

Industrial firms can lose their **competitive advantage** to exporters from countries with a lower carbon price.

Therefore, Companies can be allowed to use **high-quality international carbon credits** to offset up to a certain percentage of their taxable emissions. The EU excludes transport. Singapore provides vouchers for consumers hit by the utility price rise.

Enterprises that **emit high emissions** can be exempted from the carbon tax. But **output-based exemptions** will be the right strategy for doing the same.

Carbon pricing will face **political opposition**. Australia repealed the 2012 carbon tax just two years after it was instituted.

Recent months have revealed the **political pressures on decarbonization** in the EU. It had to sell millions of emission permits, causing a 10% drop in carbon prices.

Therefore, **communicating** the idea of its advantages at the societal level will be important. It will manage the political opposition.

### **What is the way forward for a carbon tax to fight climate change?**

A high enough carbon tax across China, the U.S, India, Russia, and Japan alone could have a notable effect on global warming. it will lead to the establishment of decarbonization as a **winning development formula**.

India, as president at the G-20 summit this September, can play a lead role by **advocating global carbon pricing** in the fight against climate change.

## 7. [Oil production cut: Oil must not get to spoil economic expectations](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Oil must not get to spoil economic expectations”** published in the **Livemint** on **4th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources

**Relevance:** About Oil production cut.

**News:** Recently, the OPEC+ members declared a plan to cut an oil production output of over 1 million barrels per day. Though this is just about 1% of global demand, this would suffice to push up global oil prices.

**Note:** *Ever since the Russia-Ukraine war, oil prices are on downhill. It resulted in large parts of the world facing inflation and growth slowdowns.*

### **How oil production has impacted the global economy?**

Oil volatility has been a geopolitical threat ever since the price increase in 1973. This was caused by a Saudi-led embargo in protest against US support for Israel. At that time, **a)** Importers suffered a shock, **b)** OPEC countries generated plenty of oil wealth and made them powerful to handle economic outcomes around the planet, **c)** Since oil is a vital commodity, its shortage has made it difficult for free-trade theory to demonstrate its benefits.

After that, almost every big recession of the past half-century in the West has been preceded by an oil upshoot (including the Great Recession).

### **What will be the impact of the oil production cut in India?**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) estimates 6.5% retail inflation in 2022-23. This is a failure of RBI's inflation target mandate. This is because the Indian basket of oil was assumed at an average \$95 per barrel.



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To avert another miss of its target, RBI's policy approach may need to assume almost similarly adverse conditions. Regardless of special oil supply deals with Russia, India cannot count on a return to cheap oil.

**Read more:** [OPEC+ production cut ahead of winter puts India on a slippery slope](#)

### What will be the future of oil production?

Earlier the US came to rescue the oil prices. But ever since the US shale revolution, the US itself has turned it into an oil major. But that does not result in reduced oil consumption. But **a)** The world's shift away from fossil fuels will not reduce the demand for oil at an immediate pace. Further, a push for clean energy has reduced investment in oil projects, leaving existing suppliers with an advantage, **b)** Russia's invasion of Ukraine might force the Western countries to weaponize not just oil trade, but also its financial enablers, and **c)** China's influence in oil-rich West Asia has risen, and US retreat from free trade is lowering the globalization. All these might lead to Cold War II.

**Read more:** [Oil Production in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

### What should be done to avert the impact of Oil production on the global economy?

The world needs to embrace globalization based on open-market principles and global peace. As the G20 president, India must remind the world that oil production is in everybody's interest.

**Read more:** [Oil slick ahead?: Opec's cut in crude output shows the futility of Western sanctions. India must brace for tougher times](#)

### 8. [Slower pace of state capex raises questions over extent to which public sector can drive economic momentum](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Slower pace of state capex raises questions over extent to which public sector can drive economic momentum**” published in the **Indian Express** on **4th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources

**Relevance:** About data on government finances.

**News:** Recently, the Controller General of Accounts released a report on the data on government finances.

### What are the key highlights in the data on government finances?

**Fiscal deficit of Centre:** The Centre's fiscal deficit for 2022-23 is supposed to significantly exceed the revised estimates presented in the recent Union budget.

**Data on tax collection:** The Centre's gross tax collections have touched Rs 25.4 lakh crore. This is about a 12% increase over the same period last year. This is only marginally lower than the growth assumed in the revised estimates for the full financial year.

Some other data mentioned include **a)** Direct tax collections have grown at a considerably faster pace than indirect taxes, **b)** Provisional direct tax collections (net of the refunds) have exceeded the revised estimates by 0.69%, **c)** Growth in income tax has so far (April-February) outpaced corporate tax collections, **d)** Overall tax collections have grown at a slower pace than nominal GDP growth.

**Data on disinvestment:** The data highlighted disinvestment as a matter of concern. This is because, against a target of Rs 60,000 crore, collections at the end of February stood at Rs 38,640 (including the proceeds from the monetisation of national highways).

**Read more:** [Fiscal constraints – On Capital Expenditure of Government](#)

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**Data on the expenditure side:** Overall central government spending for the year (April-February) grew by around 11%, marginally higher than what was factored in the revised estimates.

**Capital expenditure:** This received a significantly higher pace of 21% increase so far. However, to achieve the target for the full year the spending will have to grow by 28% in March.

**Capital expenditure by state governments:** As per a report, 15 states had spent only 54% of their capital expenditure targets for 2022-23 during the first 10 months. So, to meet their targets, states would have to raise their spending by 76% in February and March.

**Read more:** [States have a large role in ensuring capital formation](#)

### **Why Capital expenditure of state governments is essential?**

States' slower pace on capex raises questions about the public sector's ability to drive economic momentum. Further, their failure to meet this year's targets will also raise questions over their ability to achieve the scaled-up targets in 2023-24.

States account for a significant share of overall public sector investments. Hence, their spending is critical for driving investment activity and it should be speeded up.

**Read more:** [State budgets may be too optimistic about their capital expenditure](#)

## 9. [Our K-shaped recovery is a story that adds up](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Our K-shaped recovery is a story that adds up**" published in **Live Mint** on **5<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Inclusive Growth

**Relevance:** about declining tax-payers

**News:** The article discusses the various reasons behind declining tax-payers in India.

### **What are the different reasons about the decline in tax-payers in India?**

The **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** data shows that all-India poverty went up during the lockdown quarter (till June 2020), but declined thereafter for four quarters.

The poverty declined due to state aid such as free food and remote employment.

However, an accurate picture of poverty caused by the pandemic is still cannot be determined by the data and statistics.

### **What are the findings associated with income tax data?**

Income-tax data has been recently placed in the Parliament. **There are debates over the shrunken population of the income tax payer under the ₹5 lakh category.**

This group's size peaked at 50 million in 2018-19, shrank to 46.3 million in 2019-20 and then again to 41.2 million in covid-stricken 2020-21.

The arguments like **the net tax benefits and upward movement of the people** from lower slab to the next are given to justify that reduction is not due to poverty increase.

However, reasons such as **pre-pandemic distress, covid and a smaller tax base are the main reasons** behind the decline in the taxpayers.

Moreover, if there has been decline due to upward shifts and tax benefits, the shortfall still suggests a base-level income crunch, as consistent with surveys like ICE360.

Further, it is argued that **India's income Gini coefficient dropped as a result of fiscal transfers**. However, the Gini coefficient compares a huge population, so it does not become clear to know the beneficiary of the tax benefits.

It is also argued that **India had a K-shaped recovery after the pandemic**.

However, its K-shaped recovery is **more about divergent wealth rather than income**. For instance, asset prices soared and stocks portfolios made gains over the pandemic.

Due to which, Oxfam and other reports provided that India's wealth gap is widening after the pandemic.

**Must Read:** [The case for an inequality boom in India is greatly exaggerated](#)

### 10. [A new economics for a new world](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "A new economics for a new world" published in the "The Hindu" on 5th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Economy

**Relevance-** Issues related to economic policy and models for growth

**News-** The article explains the issues related to the current economic theories and practices.

**What are the economic challenges faced by the Indian economy?**

**First** is **management of inflation, interest rates, and exchange rates**. The Reserve Bank of India is expected to find a solution.

**Second** is **negotiating bilateral and multilateral trade agreements** that protect the interests of India's farmers and workers. For which coordination is required amongst the Ministries of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture.

**Third problem** is **secure employment with adequate incomes**. It involves all Ministries and all State governments.

**What are the lessons for India from the Chinese growth story?**

Economists agree that **more investments** will **boost growth**. Therefore, there are lessons in China's history.

China and India opened their economies to global trade around the same time. Both countries had **similar levels of industrial technologies**.

Since then, China has attracted many times more foreign investment than in India, and the incomes of its citizens have increased five times faster.

**Wages in China** have become much higher. So, India seems well placed to attract global investors. But Vietnam is proving to be **more attractive** than India to western and Japanese investors.

Western neo-liberal economists have attributed China's remarkable economic growth to its **free trade policies**.

However, after Vietnam's success, they rediscovered lessons from China. When both countries opened to foreign investors, they already had **high levels of human development**. Both had **universal education and good public health systems**.

**Basic human development** must precede growth. Moreover, incomes must be increased simultaneously to enable **more consumption and attract more investments**.

**What are issues with the current paradigm of economics?**

The current paradigm of economics cannot provide solutions. It is **too linear, too mathematical, too mechanical**. Economists have also separated themselves from other disciplines. They are **working in silos**.

They should break out of it and **examine the complex systems**. It will help policymakers to comprehend **complex socio-economic systems** in which many forces interact with each other.

As per current paradigm, the **number of policy instruments** must equal the **number of policy goals**. So, there is a need for **independent monetary institutions** for managing inflation, separate trade and industry specialists, and separate policies for environment management and agriculture.

**What are the steps needed to remove the inadequacy of the current economic system?**

-Economists search for **global solutions**. Trade and monetary policies that fit the United States, China, Vietnam, or India will not work for others. Their needs have emerged from **their own histories**.

Economists arrive at solutions by **comparing data trends** of different countries. In their models, people are numbers. Economists do not listen to real people.

**Global solutions and economic theories** invented in the West have caused problems. **New solutions** are essential. The inadequacy of the current paradigm was revealed by the 2008 global financial crisis; COVID-19 pandemic; and the global climate crisis.

**A new economics** is required. There is a need to **change the paradigm of economics** to bring **perspectives from other systems**. India's economists must step forward and lead the changes.

11. [In controlled digital lending, the issue of public interest](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article **"In controlled digital lending, the issue of public interest"** published in the "The Hindu" on 5th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Science and Technology

**Relevance-** Issues related to intellectual property

**News-** There is ongoing legal tussle in the United States between four major publishers and the Internet Archive, which is a not-for-profit organization trying to build a globally accessible digital library.

**What are the questions raised by the legal tussle?**

It poses a fundamental question about the **interface of copyright law and technological advancements**.

The publishers have argued that the Internet Archives has violated the **diverse rights provided under copyright law**.

The Internet Archives has argued that books under copyright protection are lent only in a **regulated manner**, through **Controlled Digital Lending**. It is not a violation of United States copyright law.

**What is the Controlled Digital Lending used by Internet Archives?**

The Internet Archive CDL model follows the **lending approach** generally seen in physical libraries. If one copy is owned by the physical library, that copy can be loaned to one person at a time. So, the Internet Archives use **one digital copy** of each non circulating print book it has stored.

Internet Archives count only one additional copy per library for the purpose of digital lending. It is irrespective of the number of physical copies of that book owned by libraries participating in the IA's digitisation.

**How is CDL beneficial for larger public interest?**

Lending physical copies of books from libraries has been on the decline. But the demand for reading books is not going down. Rather, people's **reading habits** are changing. Today, many people prefer to read books on devices such as their smartphones and tablets.

The CDL is a positive response to this trend. It helps **bridge the gap** between urban and rural, and the privileged and unprivileged. It allows even people in the remotest villages to access books from libraries that are far away.

CDL initiatives **ease access to many books** that may have gone out of print or may not be available to access in many physical libraries.

CDL has enormous **public benefits for education, research, and cultural participation**.

### What is the scenario of CDL in India?

India is yet to have a major CDL initiative. Some universities such as the NLSIU have initiated **major digitisation projects** that can facilitate CDL in future.

The outcome in the IA litigation will have considerable impacts on such initiatives in India.

### What is the ultimate conclusion?

The copyright system is not just about protecting the **interests of copyright holders**. It is equally about **protecting the rights of the users of copyrighted works**, and the **broader public interest**.

### 12. [Foreign Trade Policy 2023: Old policy for new world](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Foreign Trade Policy 2023: Old policy for new world”** published in the **Indian Express** on **5th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About new Foreign Trade Policy 2023 (FTP 2023).

**News:** Recently, India’s commerce minister unveiled a new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP).

#### About the legal status of FTP in India

The FTP is notified by the Central Government, in the exercise of powers conferred under Section 5 of the Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act, 1992.

The Act empower the Centre to “make provision for the development and regulation of foreign trade by facilitating imports and increasing exports” and to “make provision for prohibiting, restricting or otherwise regulating... import or export of goods or services or technology”.

#### What are the salient features of India’s FTP 2023?

**Read here:** [Foreign Trade Policy 2023 announced](#)

#### How this FTP 2023 is different from previous ones?

**Read here:** [Long on intent: On India’s Foreign Trade Policy](#)

What are the challenges associated with the FTP 2023?

**Non-updation of Act reflect in FTP:** The 1992 Act was set in the 20th-century mindset of regulating and restricting trade and accordingly included trade policy instruments. For example, the framework of trade policy in the 21st century has since moved towards the development and facilitation of trade, but there is no reflection of this in FTP 2023. Instead, the FTP 2023 is a compilation of “Foreign Trade Procedures” in which the words, regulate, prohibit, and restrict find more mentions than “facilitate”.

**Not focusing on product and process standards:** Most countries moved away from export incentives. Instead, they rely on improvements in product quality and production efficiencies coupled with rapid infusion of technology to expand their presence in global markets. This highlights that product and process standards are the new trade policy instruments. For example, the negotiating draft of the EU includes many of these regulatory standards. But the FTP 2023 still relies on export incentives.

**The role of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT):** The DGFT’s primary role would have to be that of a facilitator while the regulatory functions should be reduced with effectiveness. But, FTP 2023 still make the DGFT to continue playing the role of imposing import “prohibitions” or “restrictions”.

**Not addressing the weakness of the RoDTEP Scheme:** The Rajya Sabha’s Standing Committee on Commerce examined the RoDTEP Scheme and found several weaknesses. The major one was about the rates of remission of duties which were lower than desirable. The FTP has failed to address these lacunae.

**Not address the key issues with developing districts as export hubs:** The FTP 2023 is missing a commitment to support the critical component of such a programme, namely, efficient infrastructure.

**Inclusion of e-commerce might send wrong signals:** India has opposed a) WTO discussions on e-commerce for extending the rules of the organisation and b) Data portability demands of advanced economies. But the inclusion of e-commerce in FTP might imply that India is ready to engage in the WTO.

**Must read:** [India's New Foreign Trade Policy \(FTP\) and its significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

### 13. [The obstacles against humane policing](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The obstacles against humane policing**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **6th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Security

**Relevance**– Issues related to policing

**News**– The serious complaint of human rights violation recently against an IPS officer in Ambasamudram in south Tamil Nadu.

#### **How is policing behaviour across the different countries of the world?**

The U.S. has many instances of **police torture**. The death of 46-year-old an African-American George Floyd following physical torture is recent example.

**Police handling of the public** is more civilised in most of Europe.

A large number of cases of torture have also **gone unreported**. This largely constitutes assaults on women. Only about 10% of complaints are believed to have been registered.

#### **What are future expectations about a more humane and civilised police force in India?**

**First**, one of the main reasons for inhumane policing is **corruption among public servants**. It has increased in recent times. **Personal costs** involved for crusaders against corruption are increasing by the day. This is responsible for lack of **public outrage** against corruption.

**Second**, average policeman is subjected to **high stress**. The pressure to produce results has been on the rise.

**Third**, our country has large police forces. **Disseminating the message of ethics** to the lower hierarchy of such a large force is a difficult task.

#### **How is the philosophy of some political actors about policing responsible for uncivilised behaviour by police?**

Many political actors believe that **without physical force** on misbehaving citizens, the **quality of policing** cannot improve and law and order cannot be maintained.

The **tough stand of some Chief Ministers** has encouraged police leadership for **human rights transgressions**. They have preached the use of **third-degree and extra-legal methods**. The consequence is incidents like Ambasamudram.

#### **What is the way forward for civilised police?**

**Solid training in ethics** at the time of induction is not enough. The **pressures in the field** are so enormous that the **impact of ethical education** will evaporate quickly.

DGPs and IGP have a crucial role in indoctrinating young recruits on the value of sticking to the **law and civilised behaviour**.

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### 14. [The NPCI's new circular on levy charges](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The NPCI's new circular on levy charges**” published in **The Hindu** on **6<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Economy

**Relevance:** About Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs)

**News:** The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) last week issued a circular to banks directing to levy charges up to 1.1% on merchant transactions made through Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs) wallets using UPI.

**What are PPIs?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**Mobile wallet is the most prevalent form of PPI used in the country.** The wallet must be pre-loaded by users with the intended quantity. **PPIs can only be used in Indian rupees.**

The amount can be loaded/reloaded against cash or through debit to bank account, or by using credit/debit cards, UPI, or any other approved payment method in India.

**What is PPI interoperability?**

Previously, in order to use PPI at any merchant, the concerned merchant had to be directly involved with the particular PPI provider. Transactions were not possible using PPIs with which the merchant did not have a direct tie-up.

These restrictions made the PPI wallets to be only used at specific locations. **For example**, a Paytm wallet could only be used at merchants that accepted Paytm QR codes.

However, the RBI has mandated **interoperability among different PPI issuers** to overcome this limitation.

PPI issuers have now tied-up with NPCI for issuing **(a)** interoperable RuPay PPI cards or **(b)** creating interoperable wallets on UPI platforms.

As a result, prepaid instruments in the form of wallets can be linked to UPI, creating interoperable wallets on UPI platforms.

**How does PPI interoperability through UPI work?**

Once PPI wallet is linked to UPI, customers can transact using **Scan and Pay on all UPI interoperable QR codes.**

This will enable the use of PPI wallets at all merchant locations and the user can also send/receive money to any other wallet user. Similarly, a merchant with any UPI QR code can now accept payments from any PPI issuer or mobile wallet.

This interoperability will **speed up the growth of merchant transactions in rural areas and deepen digital financial inclusion** by allowing its use at various places such as healthcare, transit, education, utility bills, etc.

**Are there any charges paid by users and merchants doing wallet transactions on UPI?**

No charges are applicable if a merchant is accepting UPI payments from a customer's bank account. Charges are applicable only if the transactions above Rs 2000 are made using PPI Wallet.

**Read More:** [UPI transaction fee: Do prepaid cards, wallets stand to lose?](#)

15. [Trading forests for trees](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Trading forests for trees” published in [The Indian Express](#) on **6<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2/3 – Governance, Environment

**Relevance:** concerns associated with the **Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023**.

**News:** The government has introduced The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 to make changes in The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

**What are the objectives of the bill?**

The bill aims to **build forest carbon stock by raising plantations**. It also aims to **provide developers with land so they can fulfil their legal duty to plant trees as compensation for diverting forest land for development projects**.

The bill tries to achieve these objectives by restricting the applicability of the FC Act, and by freeing up unrecorded forests land.

**What are the concerns with the Bill?**

**Limited Application:** The **SC in 1996**, ruled that the FC Act would apply to all land parcels that were either recorded as forest or resembled the dictionary meaning of forest. This order checked rampant deforestation on land not recorded as forest.

However, **the bill seeks to limit the applicability of the FC Act only to land recorded as ‘forest’**.

This might affect millions of hectares of land (**roughly the size of Gujarat**) that have the characteristics of forests, but are not notified as such.

**Clearance for the Projects:** Restricting the scope of the FC Act will make **fewer projects to obtain forest clearance**.

One important requirement for forest clearance is that a developer must plant trees as compensation on an area of equivalent non-forest land or, in the absence of such land, plant trees on degraded forest land twice the forest area diverted.

However, the **amendment in [Forest Conservation Rules](#)** in June 2022, allowed developers to raise plantations over land **on which the FC Act is not applicable** and to exchange such areas for future needs for compensatory afforestation.

Since the bill limits the scope of FC Act only to the forest areas, **non-forest lands may be used to promote the development of private plantations, to gain forest clearance**.

This **will generate two problems such as losing unrecorded forests to plantations which will subsequently help to divert recorded forests for projects**.

**Expanding Exemptions:** The Bill proposes to expand the exemptions and make them part of the Act itself.

The Bill **seeks to exempt all strategic projects of national importance and concerning national security** within 100 km of international borders, the LAC, and the Line of Control (LoC).

This bill proposed to **extend the construction of defence related projects or a camp for paramilitary forces requiring more than 5 hectares of forest land in a Left-Wing Extremism affected area**, as specified by the Central Government.

It also seeks to **exempt security-related infrastructure requiring up to 10 hectares of forest land**, without defining its scope.

**Forest Communities:** The Bill talks about keeping up with dynamic changes in the ecological, strategic and economic aspirations of the country and **improvement of livelihoods for forest-dependent communities**.

However, the consent of forest communities on the diversion of forest land for development projects has been diminishing even after the enactment of the [Forest Rights Act, 2006](#).



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Now, with these amendments in the FC Act, **they may have no say on the extensive plantations** done on land on which they depend as communities.

### 16. [Our new foreign trade policy is transformational and futuristic](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Our new foreign trade policy is transformational and futuristic”** published in the **Livemint** on **6th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About new Foreign Trade Policy 2023 (FTP 2023).

**News:** Recently, the government unveiled a new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP).

#### **What are the salient features of India’s FTP 2023?**

Lending export competitiveness to Indian products is the key focus of the new policy. It aims to ease taxation and operations along the entire trade cycle.

**Read here:** [Foreign Trade Policy 2023 announced](#)

#### **How this FTP 2023 is different from previous ones?**

**Read here:** [Long on intent: On India’s Foreign Trade Policy](#)

#### **What are the challenges associated with the FTP 2023?**

**Read here:** [Foreign Trade Policy 2023: Old policy for new world](#)

#### **What are the potential benefits of the FTP?**

-Targeted interventions have already resulted in exports of electronic goods jumping by 162% from \$6 billion in 2015-16 to \$16 billion in 2021-22, of engineering goods by 81% and of toys by 89%. The FTP will further improve this.

-Expanding India’s self-rationing scheme for fixing input-output norms to two-star and above status holders will reduce operational hassles for exporters. The export-performance threshold for recognition of status has also lowered significantly.

-India is the world’s largest milk producer, with a 24% global share of milk production but less than 0.5 % of world dairy exports. So, special measures have been taken to support the dairy industry in upgrading technology through an exemption from export obligations.

-The latest FTP provides for reduced export obligations for battery electric vehicles, vertical farming equipment, wastewater treatment and recycling, rainwater harvesting systems and green-technology products. This will promote sustainability and climate change mitigation.

-Internationalization of trade in the Indian rupee will also promote exports.

-The FTP encourages active participation by Indian states and also Indian missions abroad for market identification, facilitating the entry of Indian products to overseas markets, marking a strategic transformation in India’s export strategy.

**Must read:** [India’s New Foreign Trade Policy \(FTP\) and its significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

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### [17. India's trade stance remains a little too protectionism happy](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**India's trade stance remains a little too protectionism happy**” published in the “**mint**” on **7th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian economy

**Relevance-** Issues related to trade policy

**News-** Recently, the government unveiled a new Foreign Trade Policy

#### **What are issues with the recently released new trade policy?**

The policy is a **recitation of the laws and processes** that regulate Indian trade. It makes no real effort to engage with the policy issues at stake.

No attempt has been made to explain how New Delhi views **global economic systems** and India's place in them.

Multinational companies are **reorienting supply chains** to reduce their dependence on China. India is a more reliable commercial partner for the West. Trade policy does not contain the strategy for **relocating supply chains** to India .

It is not looking for ways to **build trust** with trading partners such as Japan. how to share the **burdens of global sourcing and supply** to promote a **shared economic security**.

#### **What are the reasons behind lack of focus on trade related issues among policymakers?**

India's approach to trade remains **incoherent and contradictory**. Indian policymakers no longer seem to believe India can become a **great trading nation**.

Policymakers at the highest level are keen to debate **geopolitical shifts**. But in case of trade, decision-making is left to **middle-level bureaucrats or to chambers of commerce**. This is odd because geopolitics and trade policy have become **intimately connected** today.

#### **What are other issues with the foreign trade strategy of India?**

India is offering **halfhearted incentives** for manufacturers to shift their operations to India. It is offering \$10 billion for semiconductor subsidies while the US plans \$40 billion.

There is a **lack of political will**. They cannot promise that India will become part of the **redirected, resilient supply chains** that investors in Japan and the West want to build.

### [18. Express View on IT Rules amendments: Government sets itself up as judge, jury and executioner](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

“**Express View on IT Rules amendments: Government sets itself up as judge, jury and executioner**” published in the **Indian Express** on **8th April 2023**.

“**What's 'Misleading'? – Why GoI fact-checking unit can become problematic**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

**Relevance:** About amendments to IT Rules.

**News:** The government recently notified amendments to Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules.

#### **About the amendments to IT Rules**

**Read here:** [IT Ministry notifies body to flag 'fake' content about govt](#)

#### **What are the concerns associated with amendments to IT Rules?**

**Censorship of the press:** Media is already regulated by laws, including defamation. Therefore, legal boundaries for the media exist.

But the new amendments provide unbridled and unchecked powers to the government for deciding what can be published and what cannot. This undermines media freedom further.

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**Short-circuits Court judgements:** The amendments short-circuit **a)** The procedures, safeguards and conditions laid out in [Shreya Singhal v. Union of India](#) or under Section 69A of the IT Act, **b)** Madras High Court ruling in **T M Krishna v. Union of India** and the Bombay High Court ruling in **Agij Promotion of Nineteen One Media Pvt. Ltd. & Ors. v. Union of India** put a hold on the rules which provided the government with a wider say on content on OTT or digital media platforms.

**Issues in regulating intermediaries:** Intermediaries are one of the gateways to accessing work by the media. Therefore, any arbitrary restrictions on them may affect public access to news.

**Not clearly defined:** The amendments are not clear on terms such as “misleading”. For example, the facts of a media report can be beyond reproach. However, if the fact-checking unit finds the narrative ‘problematic’, the intermediary can be ordered to take it down as it’s “misleading”

**Conflict of interest:** The role played by the fact-checking unit has a significant conflict of interest as it plays the role of judge, jury and executioner.

**High chance of misuse:** The government applied the laws with weaponising trends to curb opposition and dissent. Hence, the present amendment might lead to the same.

### What should be done?

The government should think over the consequences if states use grey areas in the law to regulate media. The government has to follow the recent SC judgment ensuring Freedom of Press and should allow media to work without hindrance, as it is essential for democracy.

### 19. [Science for all – LIGO-India must contribute to the communities it needs sustenance from](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Science for all – LIGO-India must contribute to the communities it needs sustenance from**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

**Relevance:** About the LIGO-India project.

**News:** The Union Cabinet has recently granted permission to set up a gravitational-wave detection facility (LIGO-India) in Maharashtra.

### What are Gravitational waves?

**Read here:** [What are Gravitational waves?](#)

### About LIGO-India project

The project will consist of a detector called the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO). It is built in the image of the twin LIGO instruments already operational in the U.S.

After the detection of gravitational waves in 2016, a third detector is being built in India as part of the LIGO-India collaboration. This is to improve the detectors’ collective ability to pinpoint sources of gravitational waves in the sky.

**Read more:** [Scientists to test land for LIGO](#)

### What are the benefits of approving the LIGO-India project?

**a)** India could become a global site of gravitational physics research, **b)** India can aid training and the handling of precision technologies and sophisticated control systems. Thereby, cementing a reputation for successfully running an experimental Big Science project, **c)** LIGO-India can demonstrate India’s ability to pursue research and enhances Indian society’s relationship with science.

### What are the challenges in implementing the LIGO-India project?

The prior scientific projects of India faced severe hardships. Such as [Challakere Science City](#) and the stalled [India-based Neutrino Observatory \(INO\)](#). This is because

#### **Science projects need large land tracts, with inevitable implications for land-use change:**

Science projects have to contest land rights, balance the sustainable use of natural resources, meet carbon sequestration targets, and enforce human rights.

In some areas, science projects are seen as an “agent of colonisation”. For instance, Hawaii’s Thirty Meter Telescope is to be built on land the locals hold sacred. Hence, they have to balance the interplay between the history of science and settler colonialism.

**Science projects in developing countries:** In the economically developing world, countries like India have the responsibility to define their public value, beyond benefits to national industry and research.

### What should be done?

-The government has to ensure adequate access to land and other resources and conduct public outreach programmes for the success of the LIGO-India project. The government has to make clear what the LIGO-India project can provide for the nation.

-The government has to ensure the timely release of funds for construction, followed by issuing the allocated resources without delay.

### 20. [‘India is well within its right to ensure quality’](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**India is well within its right to ensure quality**” published in the “**mint**” on **8th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Economy

**Relevance**– Issue related to trade

**News**– several WTO members objected to India issuing quality control orders(QCO) for products of mass consumption, such as machinery safety equipment, pressure cookers, toys and air conditioners, to curb a Chinese import surge and boost exports.

#### **Is the quality control order compliant with WTO provisions?**

QCOs are **first applied in the domestic market** and only then are they **imposed on imports**. So, India has **rights to bring QCOs**.

western countries impose quality norms on our products. So, India is **duty-bound to retaliate** by imposing QCOs on their products. According to **WTO rules**, members should use **similar standards** for domestic as well

QCOs cannot be challenged at WTO if they are imposed on **grounds of health, safety, environment and deceptive trade practice, or national security**. The Centre argued that cheap quality products from other countries pose a health risk for children in India.

#### **What is the rationale behind issuing quality control orders by the Indian government?**

QCOs are increasingly being used by the government to curb the **dumping of cheap products from China amid the widening trade deficit**. It is nearly 40% of the total deficit. India has a total deficit of \$87.5 billion.

India lags in terms of **international standards**. It must ramp up its **focus on quality** to make the best of **free trade agreements** and take advantage of the **China-plus-one strategy** adopted by the West.

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### 21. [Some advice to India on the IFA negotiations](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Some advice to India on the IFA negotiations**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **8th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Economy. GS2- Important international institutions

**Relevance**– Issues related to WTO working.

**News**– World Trade Organization is working on investment facilitation agreement (IFA). It is backed by more than 100 countries.

#### **What are the issues with investment facilitation agreement?**

There are apprehension that foreign investors could use IFA to bring claims under the existing BITs. Foreign investors may use the **most favoured nation provision in BITs** to use provisions in IFA perceived to be more beneficial than provisions of underlying BIT.

The foreign investor may use the provision of **fair and equitable treatment (FET)** present in BITs to challenge **non-compliance with IFA**.

Older investment treaties rarely explain the meaning of the FET provision. It allows **ISDS tribunals** to provide its interpretation. Tribunals have held that the **FET provision** includes **investors’ legitimate expectations**. The foreign investor may argue that the commitments undertaken by a state under the IFA create ‘legitimate expectations’ of the investor.

Another provision of the IFA that allows the use of ISDS mechanism can be the so-called **umbrella clause**. It is a BIT clause that allows contractual and other commitments owed to a foreign investor to be brought under the **treaty’s protective umbrella**.

#### **Why is the ISDS arbitration tribunal unlikely to agree with the investor if a foreign investor brings such claims?**

Many BITs exempt an **economic integration agreement** from the **application of MFN**. Thus, the possibility of foreign investors successfully importing IFA provisions into the BIT is remote. It is doubtful that an ISDS tribunal will accept the argument that mere **non-compliance with IFA** breaches an **investor’s legitimate expectations**.

Most new investment treaties avoid ‘**umbrella clauses**’ altogether. This limits the possibility of investors suing states for **non-compliance of IFA obligations** as a breach of a BIT’s ‘umbrella clause’.

#### **What is the way forward for success for investment facilitation agreement?**

The IFA cannot bind an ISDS tribunal. For the ISDS tribunal, the IFA is just another **international law instrument** that must be **interpreted and applied** in accordance with the **context of the relevant BIT**.

Countries can overcome this problem by amending their respective BITs to **exclude the IFA from its scope**.

The possibility of an ISDS tribunal **interpreting provisions broadly** can never be ruled out. But this cannot be a basis to **oppose international lawmaking**.

India should not be opposed to joining the IFA negotiations at the WTO due to fear of **ISDS claims**.

### 22. [Building a blue economy: What India can learn from China](#)

**Source**- The post is based on the article “**Building a blue economy: What India can learn from China**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **10th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS 3 – Agriculture and allied activities

**Relevance**– Issue related to blue economy

**News**– The article explains the potential of fishing sector for blue economy

### **What are the reasons for the dispute on fishing rights between India and Sri Lanka?**

The **Indo-Sri Lankan maritime boundary agreements** were signed in 1974 and 1976. It allowed fishermen of both nations to enjoy the rights traditionally enjoyed in each other's waters. Maritime boundaries lack **physical demarcation**. So, the **lull in fishing activity** during the civil war in Sri Lanka, encouraged Indian fishermen to encroach into Sri Lankan waters. With the end of hostilities in 2009, the Sri Lankan fishing community **reclaimed their rights**. It brings them into conflict with Indian fishers.

### **What is the importance of the fishing sector?**

The fishing fleet is an important component of the **sea power of the state**. The role of this fleet has grown sharply. In the two world wars, fishing vessels were widely used as part of the navy **for combat tasks**.

China has mobilised the fishing industry to meet the **rising demand for protein**. China is today a fishery superpower. It owns the world's **largest deep-water fishing (DWF) fleet**. China had begun distant deepwater fishing, as far back as in 1985.

China also uses a part of its fishing fleet as a **"maritime militia"**, which assists the navy and coast guard in their tasks.

### **What are some facts about the fishing sector in India?**

In India, fish is an **affordable and rich source of animal protein**. It is one of the **healthiest options to mitigate hunger and malnutrition**.

Since Independence, India's marine fishery has been **dominated by the poor, small-scale fisheries**. They deliver only **2% of marine fish** to the market, while 98% is caught by mechanised and motorised craft.

India's fisheries are being transformed into a **commercial enterprise**. The sector has shown steady growth and has become a **major contributor of foreign exchange**.

India ranks amongst the world's leading seafood exporting nations. Fisheries provide livelihood to about 15 million fishers and fish-farmers at the primary level. It generates jobs, along the **value-chain in transportation, cold-storages, and marketing**.

### **What are the issues with the fishing sector in India?**

India has not invested much in a **deepwater fleet**. Most of the fishing is being undertaken in coastal waters. India fishermen have to **compete with neighbours**, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, in restricted fishing grounds.

Fishing vessels often drift into foreign waters. It leads to **apprehension** by navies/coast guards and **prolonged imprisonment** of the crew.

Moreover, the rich resources in India's EEZ remain underexploited. Much of fishing is done by the better equipped fishing fleets of other Indo-Pacific countries. Some of them indulge in **illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing**. IUU also has serious security and environmental implications.

Most of India's fisheries exports are at a **low level of value addition**. There is less focus on "ready-to-eat" or "ready-to-cook" marine products.

### **What is the way forward for the fishing sector in India?**

India needs to evolve a **long-term vision for its fishing industry** with focus on four areas:

**Mechanisation and modernisation** of fishing vessels by providing **communication links and electronic fish-detection devices**.

Developing **deep-water fishing fleets**, with bigger, sea-going trawlers equipped with refrigeration facilities.

A DWF fleet will have to be built around the **"mothership" concept**. Large vessel would accompany the fleet to provide fuel, medical and on-board processing facilities.

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Development of **modern fishing harbours** with **adequate berthing and post-harvest facilities**, including **cold storage, preservation, and packaging of fish**.

### 23. Awaiting lift-off into the Second Space Age

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Awaiting lift-off into the Second Space Age” published in “The Hindu” on 10th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Awareness in the field of space

**News-** The article explains the changing nature of the space sector.

#### **What are some facts about the first space age?**

The Space Age began in 1957 with the launch of **satellite Sputnik 1**. In 1961, cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the world's first person in space.

The period was dominated by the **Cold War**. Between the 1950s to 1991, 60 to 120 space launches took place annually and **93% of these** were by the United States and the erstwhile USSR governments.

#### **What have been the important developments in the space sector in India?**

India made a modest entry into the **First Space Age** in the 1960s. The first sounding rocket was launched at Thumba in 1963.

In 1969, the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** was set up. It has over 15,000 employees and an annual budget between **₹12,000 crore-₹14,000 crore** in recent years.

Its first major project was the **Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE)**. It involved leasing a U.S. satellite in 1975-76 for **educational outreach**.

Satellite technology was a **new mass communication tool**. This led to the **INSAT series in the 1980s, followed by GSAT**. It provided the backbone for the country's **tele-communication and broadcasting infrastructure**.

This was followed by remote **sensing capability development**. It includes the use of **space-based imagery for weather forecasting, resource mapping of forests, analysing agricultural yields, groundwater and watersheds, fisheries and urban management**.

There is now focus on **Oceansat and Cartosat series**. The field of **satellite-aided navigation** emerged later. It began with **GAGAN, a joint project between ISRO and the Airports Authority of India**.

GAGAN aim is to augment **Global Positioning System coverage** of the region, to improve air traffic management over Indian airspace. This has now been expanded to a regional navigation satellite system called **Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)**.

In parallel came the development of **satellite launch capabilities**. Beginning with the SLV-1 in the 1980s. ISRO has developed the PSLV series that has become its workhorse with over 50 successful launches.

#### **What are various facts about the second space age?**

The origins of the Second Space Age can be **traced to the Internet**.

The last 15 years witnessed another transformation. The **mobile telephony**, followed by smartphones has led to drastic changes. **Broadband, OTT and now 5G** promise a double-digit annual growth in demand for satellite-based services.

It is **dominated by the private sector**. In terms of the end-user revenue, only a fifth is generated by the government. The growing role of the private sector is also evident in the **numbers and ownership of satellites**. According to the **United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs**, there are 8,261 satellites in orbit, of which nearly 5,000 are active.

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Till 2010, about 60 to 100 satellites were launched annually. In 2020, 1283 satellites were launched. Today, **Starlink** operates a **constellation of over 3,500 satellites** and has a million paying customers.

Jeff Bezos of Amazon has launched **Project Kuiper** to bring **low-latency broadband connectivity** around the globe.

The Indian private sector is responding to the demands of the Second Space Age. From less than a dozen space start-ups five years ago, there are over 100 today.

The **pace of investment** is growing. From \$3 million in 2018, it doubled in 2019 and crossed \$65 million in 2021.

### **What are various achievements of ISRO in terms of satellites?**

Today, ISRO manages four to five launches annually. It manages **53 operational satellites** – 21 for communication, 21 for earth observation, eight for navigation and the remaining as scientific experimental satellites.

ISRO has missions such as **Chandrayaan, Mangalyaan and Gaganyaan**. ISRO has always been an open organisation that has worked closely with the Indian private sector.

ISRO today is the **operator, user, service provider, licensor, rule maker and also an incubator**.

### **What is the government response to changes in the space sector?**

In 2017, the government introduced the first **draft Space Activities Bill** in Parliament but it lapsed in 2019.

There has been talk of commercialising the **PSLV and SSLV launch services** and **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)** was set up to replace Antrix.

The **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACE)** was set up in 2020 as a single-window-clearance for the private sector. An **Indian Space Association (ISpA)** was created as an industry association.

In recent years, a series of **policy papers** have been circulated for discussion. It includes **telecom policy, an earth observation policy and a foreign direct investment policy**.

### **What is the way forward for the space sector in India?**

The start-ups in the space sector are different. Their revenue stream depends on **space-related activities**. They need a **different relationship with ISRO and the government**.

Now, there is a **need for legislation** for the space sector. It will help to set up a **regulatory authority and create an enabling environment** for raising venture capital funding into the Indian space start-up industry.

### 24. Directing AI for better and smarter legislation

**Source-** The post is based on the article **“Directing AI for better and smarter legislation”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **10th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Scientific Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life.

**Relevance-** Various applications of AI

**News-** The article deals with scope of AI to improve the legislative process

### **What are various examples of countries using the power of AI for assisting the legislatures?**

The House of Representatives in the United States have introduced an AI tool to **automate the process of analysing differences** between Bills, amendments and current laws.

The Netherlands House of Representatives has implemented the **“Speech2Write” system**. It **converts voice to text** and also **translates voice into written reports**. It comprises **automatic speech recognition and automated editing capabilities**.



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**Japan's AI tool** assists in the preparation of responses for its legislature and also helps in the **automatic selection** of relevant highlights in parliamentary debates.

Brazil has developed an AI system called **Ulysses** which supports **transparency and citizen participation**.

India is also innovating and working towards making parliamentary activities digital such as the **'One Nation, One Application' and the National e-Vidhan (NeVA) portal**.

### **What are various uses of AI for the legislature?**

AI can also **simulate the potential effects of laws**. **Various datasets** such as the Census, data on household consumption, taxpayers, beneficiaries from various schemes, and public infrastructure **can be modelled**.

AI can uncover **potential outcomes of a policy**. It can also help in **identifying laws that are outdated** in the present circumstances and require amendment. For example, the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897.

AI can analyse **citizens' grievances and social media responses**. It identifies issues and priorities that need immediate attention. It can also assist parliamentarians in seeking citizen **inputs for public consultation** of laws and preparing a manifesto.

### **What is the way forward to harness the potential of AI?**

Digitalisation can be utilised in the **field of law, policy-making, and parliamentary activities** by harnessing the power of AI.

It needs to be ensured that the use of AI must be encouraged in an **open, transparent, and citizen-friendly manner**. Policymakers need to be mindful of the fact that it is a **means to an end and not an end in itself**.

For AI to work in India, we first need to **codify our laws**. Current laws are **opaque, and complex**. There is a **huge translation gap between law-making, law-implementing and law-interpreting organisations**.

The codification should contain a **complete chain**, right from the **parent Act to the subordinate pieces of legislation** passed by the central government and the **amendment notifications**.

There is a need to make laws **machine-consumable with a central law engine**. It can be a **single source** for all acts, subordinate pieces of legislation, gazettes, compliances, and regulations.

### [25. On India's new stance on trade agreements: It takes India back to the pre-reforms era](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article **"Prabhash Ranjan on India's new stance on trade agreements: It takes India back to the pre-reforms era"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **10th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Economy

**Relevance-** Issues related to international trade and investment issues

**News-** The article deals with India new approach to FTAs

### **What is the record of India in signing FTAs?**

India signed several FTAs in the 2000s with countries like Singapore, Korea, Malaysia, and Japan. These FTAs include **binding rules on both, international trade liberalisation, and the protection of foreign investment from arbitrary state conduct**.

In the last few years, India has signed FTAs with Mauritius and the UAE and an interim one with Australia. India is currently negotiating FTAs with the UK, European Union, Canada, and Israel.

### How is India 's FTA policy different from its earlier approach?

India is **decoupling international trade law from international investment law**. The FTAs with Mauritius, UAE, and Australia contain detailed **international rules on trade**. But, **rules on foreign investment protection** are missing.

There is **absence of investment protection** in these FTAs. It is more striking because India has unilaterally terminated its **bilateral investment treaty (BIT)** that protects foreign investment with Mauritius and Australia.

In FTA 2.0, India is ostensibly following an approach that can be described as the **“domestication of IIL”**. It is a process where countries develop **domestic rules in parallel to international rules** to protect foreign investment.

They give primacy to their **domestic laws in safeguarding foreign investment** by doing two things-

First, **domestically legislating investment protection standards** that are typically part of International Investment Law. Second, providing a **dispute resolution mechanism** at the local level instead of **treaty arbitration**. South Africa is a good example of this kind of domestication. India has also **unilaterally terminated** most of its investment treaties. It has signed a few BITs in the last decade.

Unlike South Africa, India hasn't legislated an **exclusive law for the protection of foreign investment**. But the message is quite clear. **International trade commitments** will be protected under **international law** and foreign investment will be guarded as per **municipal laws**.

India's approach can also be explained as **“de-legalisation of international economic law”**. It prefers **domestic adjudication for trade and investment matters** at the cost of international law.

### What can be inferred from India's new approach to FTAs?

The **domestication or de-legalisation of IIL** takes India back to the pre-1991 era when India was not in favour of **international legalisation of economic relations**.

Today, India desperately seeks foreign investment but is **suspicious about IIL**. The decoupling of international trade law from IIL is not in sync with the **approaches of India's current and potential FTA partner countries**.

### [26. New amendment rules on intermediary guidelines amount to censorship](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**“Intermediary oversight should never be opaque”** published in the **Livemint** on **10th April 2023**.

**“New amendment rules on intermediary guidelines amount to censorship”** published in **The Hindu** on **10th April 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

**Relevance:** About amendments to IT Rules.

**News:** The government recently notified amendments to Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules.

About the amendments to IT Rules

**Read here:** [IT Ministry notifies body to flag 'fake' content about govt](#)

What are the concerns associated with amendments to IT Rules?

**Lack of clarity:** There is a lack of clarity on how the fact-checker would be governed and allow redressal of faulty calls. If 'misleading' posts are banned, then the wide scope for interpretation of the term “misleading” would make it easy for a fact-checker to abuse its authority.

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Further, in 'the Information Age', it is challenging to set the truth apart from falsehood.

**Forgets Arm's length of government and media:** In India, freedom of the press is guaranteed through Article 19 of the Constitution, with media rights and public right to free speech derived from this Article. This means any relationship between the government and the media should be one kept at arm's length, with the media having sufficient freedom. But these amendments will impact the freedom of the press.

**Create chilling effect:** By threatening to remove a platform's immunity for content that is flagged by a government unit, it is clear that the Union government intends to create a "chilling effect" on the right to speech and expression on online platforms.

**Read more:** [Express View on IT Rules amendments: Government sets itself up as judge, jury and executioner](#)

What should be done?

- All rule-making and rule enforcers must outlive changes in every domain. To ensure that, the fact-checking body should be kept transparent and open to scrutiny.
- Autonomy for the fact-checker would be an essential condition to address the conflict of interest between the Centre and the media firms. Else, it will act as a another arm of government's regulatory system.
- The rule's basic validity needs to be tested by the judiciary in the light of our right to free speech. The Constitution must prevail.

### [27. Race to the bottom – Restricting journalists does not serve the interests of China or India](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Race to the bottom – Restricting journalists does not serve the interests of China or India**" published in **The Hindu** on **10th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

**Relevance:** About actions against journalists from India and China.

**News:** Recently, the Chinese government froze the visas of two Indian journalists. The Chinese government have said that its recent decision was a response to India taking steps aimed at Chinese journalists.

How are journalists dragged into the geopolitical tensions between India and China?

Until 2016, reporters from both countries were on one-year visas and largely left to do their work. But in 2016, three Chinese reporters were expelled after visiting a Tibetan settlement without permission from the Home Affairs Ministry. This reduction was subsequently placed on all Chinese reporters with three-month visas in 2017.

According to Chinese reports, a Chinese reporter was told to leave India this year. In response, China warned only two Indian reporters in China to face countermeasures if Chinese visas were not restored to one-year validity.

What are the implications of actions against journalists?

**a)** If Chinese journalists were asked to leave and vice versa, then there would be no reporters from the world's two largest countries covering the other, **b)** Absence of on-the-ground context might lead to the spread of fake news. For example, there has been fake news of a coup in China last year, **c)** India's recent actions, including the government's response to a BBC documentary, appear to show insecurity.

What should be done?

-China should understand that reciprocity should also include giving Indian organisations the kind of freedom that Chinese media enjoy in India. For example, even in the absence of Chinese employees, Chinese media can continue to report with their Indian journalists. In contrast, China bars foreign media organisations from hiring Chinese journalists except as assistants.

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-Restricting all of the Chinese journalists will be counterproductive, Instead, India should scrutinise the non-journalistic activities of some Chinese reporters.

### 28. Amul vs Nandini threatens to limit choices for consumers

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**“Who Moved My Milk? – Amul vs Nandini battle is meaningless. India needs both to expand nationally and shake things up”** published in **The Times of India** on **11th April 2023**.

**“Express View: Amul vs Nandini threatens to limit choices for consumers”** published in the **Indian Express** on **11th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About the milk cooperatives.

**News:** Recently, Amul, a Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, announced on social media that it will make online deliveries in Bengaluru. This supposedly threatens the local Karnataka Cooperative Milk Producers’ Federation (KMF) alias Nandini.

#### **Why milk cooperatives are fighting with each other for markets?**

**Share for the market:** India is the world’s largest milk producer, with 222. 1 million tonnes production in 2021-22. Almost half the milk produced is consumed locally. The rest enters the urban market, which is the growth area.

**Role of state governments:** Co-ops impart a unique dimension to milk and milk product markets. For example, the Karnataka government provides incentives for them. So, they have little flexibility over procurement or end-product pricing. In a difficult phase such as the lockdowns, the government was reluctant to raise product prices.

**To fulfil farmer’s interest:** Dairy is often the primary source of income for many landless households and marginal farmers. So, it’s in their best interest, successful brands like Amul and Nandini procure and sell across markets. In short, Karnataka’s dairy farmers, like their Gujarat counterparts, need to find new markets.

**Surplus procurement:** As per the government, milk cooperatives and private players share the liquid milk market. This market is expected to touch 54% by 2026, from 41% now. Milk cooperatives procure more from farmers with their attractive collection strategies. For example, Nandini Cooperative provide Rs 6-per-litre incentive to farmers. This led the KMF unions to procure milk far in excess of what can be absorbed within Karnataka. This surplus is, then, being “dumped” as milk powder, butter and ghee in other states.

#### **Why blocking competition between milk cooperatives is wrong?**

Neither producers nor consumers benefit from such protectionism and beggar-thy-neighbour policies. Competition can enable consumers to take the form of better quality or product differentiation.

By favouring one brand over the other might trigger a similar response in other states. For example, by blocking Amul in Bengaluru, politicians are risking similar retribution when it comes to Nandini selling outside Karnataka.

Blocking competition can frame a political economy challenge. Hence, the government has to consider electoral necessities before embarking on market reforms.

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29. [Small & Green Future – That India needs more nuclear power generation is not in doubt. But it should rely less on big plants](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Small & Green Future – That India needs more nuclear power generation is not in doubt. But it should rely less on big plants**” published in **The Times of India** on **11th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Energy.

**Relevance:** About the nuclear power plants.

**News:** India, by 2047, aims to produce 9% of its electricity from nuclear power, up from the current 3%. By 2031, installed nuclear power capacity is set to increase from 6,780 MW to 22,480 MW with 20 new nuclear plants. In that process, ten new reactors were approved recently.

### **About the nuclear power plants around the world**

Rich countries that have had 20 years of nuclear power generation. A 2019 IAEA report of nuclear plants’ age-profile highlighted the challenges of ‘nuclear fade’.

**Note:** *Nuclear fade means the nations are giving up on nuclear power as plants age and costs rise.* About 83% of plants across Europe are over 30 years old, in the US more than 90% are over 30. Though nuclear plants had licences for decades more, several retired early. This stalls the transition to non-carbon energy.

In contrast, almost 80% of China’s plants are less than 10 years old; the corresponding number for India is 40%.

**Read more:** [Nuclear Energy: Status, Advantages and Concerns – Explained, pointwise](#)

### **What does India need to do while planning nuclear power plants?**

India should move away from big plants and plans small modular reactors (SMRs). Though SMRs only generate a third of a nuclear plant’s power, many can be built since the smaller investment is easier to mobilise. SMRs are reportedly safer in design and simpler to construct and require much less land. They are therefore easier propositions to sell to locals.

According to the IAEA, SMRs’ economic viability in operational settings is not proven. But India’s huge electricity demand, need for non-carbon energy, net zero commitment can be aided significantly with SMRs.

**Read more:** [\[Yojana October Summary\] Energy Security: Nuclear Power – Explained, pointwise](#)

30. [Burning bright – India must balance conservation efforts with the rights of forest dwellers](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Burning bright – India must balance conservation efforts with the rights of forest dwellers**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About tiger population.

**News:** Recently, the government released the 5th cycle of India’s Tiger Census. Based on the survey, the tiger population in India has grown from 1,411 in 1972 to 3,167 in 2022.

### **What are the key findings of India’s tiger census?**

**Read here:** [India is home to 75% of global tigers; count rises above 3,000](#)

### **What are the government initiatives that led to an increase in the tiger population?**

**Read here:** [Increasing tiger population in India and government initiatives – Explained, pointwise](#)

### What are the challenges India faces with the increased tiger population?

The 'Status of Tiger' report warns that **a)** All of India's five main tiger zones, while largely stable, face challenges of deforestation and loss of tiger habitat, **b)** In Western Ghats, tiger numbers are on the decline, with only populations within protected forests stable, and **c)** Tiger reserves has increased from nine in 1973 to 53 today. However, the increase in reserves has not resulted in all of these reserves becoming suitable habitats for tigers.

The other challenges include **a)** Serious conservation efforts are needed in tiger population recovery in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. Wildlife habitats in these areas face various threats that include habitat encroachment, hunting, conflicts with humans, unregulated cattle grazing, excessive harvesting of non-timber forest products, fires, mining, and expanding infrastructure, **b)** According to Experts, India's tiger reserves, in their present state, can be able to sustain populations of up to 4,000 only.

**Read more:** [Tiger Reserves in India \(Updated 2023\)](#)

### What more can be done?

-The government has to maintain the delicate balance between conservation efforts and ensuring the right to livelihood and dignified living of forest-dwelling communities.

-The cheetah, the leopard, the lion and the tiger can co-exist in India only with the right incentives in place for all stakeholders.

### 31. Ride Globalisation, Again

**Source:** The post is based on the article "Ride Globalisation, Again" published in **The Times of India** on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy

**Relevance:** About services exports and manufacturing sector

**News:** Services exports in India have risen remarkably. This has made India recover from the pandemic loss and focus on other aspects of the economy.

### What are some of the findings on services exports?

After the pandemic, net services exports have risen to \$9 billion per month in the last financial year, 2021-2022. **This financial year there has been a steep rise and it has gone up to \$16 billion per month.**

**India's net exports in services have been positive while its net exports in goods are negative.** In the two years since the pandemic, India's net export in services has boomed.

### What has caused a boom in the services exports?

**The big IT firms of India** have played a major role in services exports.

It has also risen due to the **Global Capability Centres (GCC)**. GCC refers to offices set up by large multinational firms that provide IT, research, and analytical support to the parent companies.

**India currently hosts 40% of the world's GCCs and this number is expected to rise.**

Moreover, there is more potential in India to increase its services exports in the sectors **such as finance, medicine, education and law. These sectors have not yet been utilized in services exports.**

These sectors along with IT exports and a strong privacy and data protection law will position India at the centre of new **wave of globalization of services.**

However, this doesn't mean India should abandon manufacturing.

**Must Read:** [Services Sector in India – Explained](#)

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### How can India create job in its manufacturing sector?

India has a strong presence in skilled manufacturing such as **two-wheelers and pharmaceuticals**.

However, **India has not been successful in creating low skilled jobs in manufacturing** and there is a need to create more jobs in the manufacturing sector.

Moreover, jobs cannot be created by selectively focusing on industries through industrial policy, protecting some areas with tariffs and subsidising others with the production-linked incentive scheme.

This is because **these schemes typically benefit large firms in capital intensive industries and not act as a mass job creator**.

**For instance**, according to government data, with 15% of the proposed investment in PLI schemes, **only 3% of the proposed jobs have been created**.

Therefore, there is a need for **building infrastructure, producing a better educated and healthier workforce, and promoting easing doing business** to create jobs.

Moreover, well-paying jobs created through skilled service exports will create other associated low-skilled service jobs.

### What can be the way ahead?

India should work to persuade the world to open up to the possibilities of services exports in sectors that are traditionally regarded as **non-tradable, such as health, education, legal and accounting services**.

**For example**, an Indian doctor cannot diagnose patients in the UK because their Indian qualifications are not recognised.

Hence, **India's G20 presidency is an opportunity for India** to push for lowering barriers to the globalisation of services.

### 32. [Celebrate the rise in tiger population, but look beyond the numbers](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Express View: Celebrate the rise in tiger population, but look beyond the numbers**" published in the **Indian Express** on **12th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About tiger population.

**News:** Recently, the government released the 5th cycle of India's Tiger Census. Based on the survey, the tiger population in India has grown from 1,411 in 1972 to 3,167 in 2022.

What are the key findings of India's tiger census?

**Read here:** [India is home to 75% of global tigers; count rises above 3,000](#)

What are the government initiatives that led to an increase in the tiger population?

**Read here:** [Increasing tiger population in India and government initiatives – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the challenges India faces with the increased tiger population?

**Read here:** [Burning bright – India must balance conservation efforts with the rights of forest dwellers](#)

What are the challenges highlighted in the tiger census?

These include **a)** There is a decline of the genetically unique varieties of the animal in Odisha and parts of Northeast India, **b)** Simlipal tiger is known for their unusually broad and fused stripe. But the numbers of the Simlipal tiger have been coming down steadily in the last decade. This is because the reserve in Odisha is unable to provide its tiger population with an adequate

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prey base, **c)** Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh has become one of the hotspots of human-tiger conflict — villagers in the vicinity of the reserve allegedly beat up tigers to death in 2019 and 2020 and **d)** Understaffed forest departments find themselves ill-equipped to deal with many challenges. Overall, better protection and augmentation of prey in protected areas “could help increase the tiger population”.

### [33. We need proactive regulation to fend off SVB-like bank failures](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**We need proactive regulation to fend off SVB-like bank failures**” published in **Live Mint** on **13<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Economy – Money and Banking

**Relevance:** measures needed to prevent bank crisis.

**News:** The article discusses the Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) crisis and provides measures to prevent such a crisis.

**About Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) crisis**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What were the steps taken by the US to minimize the impact of the crisis?**

To calm down the financial markets, the US Treasury Secretary announced **special protection even for uninsured deposits held with failed banks**.

It is estimated to cost the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corp (FDIC) over \$20 billion.

The US Federal Reserve also **opened up a special liquidity window**, in the midst of its policy tightening to control inflation, against the face value of securities.

**What were the scenarios at the time of the SVB crisis?**

The **gap in the value of assets and liabilities of US commercial banks** stood at \$2,137 billion. **Mark-to-market losses were** over \$2 trillion which was more than 40% of the capital of all banks.

**More than 50% of SVB’s long-dated securities had fewer financial values**, with facing mark-to-market losses. **Its capital ratios were unfavourable** and its customer profile skewed in favour of bulk deposits.

**What can be done to prevent a bank crisis?**

It is necessary to come up with **laws that bridge gaps and provide real-time necessary information on fresh developments**, including the use of technology for financial transactions and the behaviour of participants.

There is also a need to **constantly scan big data using machine learning and artificial intelligence**.

It will help to model alternate scenarios and provide solutions for authorities to intervene in time to avert disasters and minimize large-scale mishappening.

### [34. Corporate power and Indian inflation](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Corporate power and Indian inflation**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **13th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- India economy

**Relevance-** Issues related to inflation

**News-** The former Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Viral Acharya, is reported to have observed that unlike in the West where it abated with COVID-19, core inflation remains elevated in India. He ascribed it to the pricing power of five big corporations.



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### **What are counter arguments against Viral Acharya that core inflation in India is due to pricing power of big five companies?**

**First**, a divergence between inflation rates in India and the rest of the world is not new. After the **global financial crisis** of 2008, Indian inflation surged. It reached levels higher than the economies of the United States and the United Kingdom.

This was due to a **surge in food price inflation** in India, driven by **negative agricultural shocks**. Food-price inflation tends to feed into **core inflation**. So, it cannot be concluded that Indian inflation is higher than in the West today due to corporate pricing power.

There is evidence that in India, food price inflation affects **core inflation**.

**Second**, the argument that corporate power plays a role in **elevated core inflation** is based on an observation of a short time period. Wholesale price inflation was considerably low in the six months preceding March 2023, but consumer price inflation was not.

A **mismatch between WP and CP inflations** is not new. In 2021-22, WP inflation surged by 12 percentage points, but CP inflation actually declined.

So, the maintenance of high price increases by firms in the retail sector even with low wholesale price inflation in 2022-23 may just be a **compensating mechanism**.

**Third**, attributing elevated core inflation in consumer prices to pricing power of the Big 5 assumes that these conglomerates have a **high presence in retail trade**. Their presence is greater in the manufacturing and infrastructure sectors than in retail. It may be noted that their presence in the economy itself may not be so high.

**Fourth**, to compare WP inflation with CPI inflation is not the right thing. The **commodity basket of CPI** is different from the wholesale price index. So, we would be comparing apples with oranges here.

The claim that **corporate pricing power** is driving current inflation in India has no solid basis. For the first three quarters of the financial year, over **75% of the direct contribution to inflation** is by sectors where the Big 5 presentation is low.

### **What can be concluded ultimately about core inflation in India?**

**Corporate pricing power** does exist. Pricing power in Indian industry and that the **rate of profit** in India is high in a global comparison.

However, the question is the extent to which corporate power is driving overall inflation in India beyond its obvious role in elevating the price level.

In theory, corporations can drive inflation if **concentration rises continuously** and if they come to dominate the economy. India is not in that position. But **industrial concentration** is most likely rising in India.

### 35. Is the current regulatory system equipped to deal with AI?

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Is the current regulatory system equipped to deal with AI?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **14th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Governance. GS3- Science and technology

**Relevance**– Issue related to AI and its use

**News**– The growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies and their deployment has raised questions about privacy, monopolisation and job losses.

### **Why AI is not a threat for the society?**

Technological change improves **aggregate productivity**. **Output of society** also goes up. People today are better off than they were because of technology.

There is nothing special or different this time around with AI. This is just **another round of machines** being used to **increase productivity**.

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The primary risks emerging from AI happen to be the same risks with other digital technologies, like how political systems **integrate those technologies**.

Some AI based systems are already operational and have been used for some time. AI is used today in **facial recognition in airports** in India and by law enforcement agencies.

The human mind has **general intelligence**. They are able to think from scratch and be able to try to solve a problem. Machines don't know what to do.

ChatGPT is just one **big, glorified database** of everything that has been written on the Internet.

**What are issues related to the regulatory system to deal with the privacy and competition threats arising from AI?**

One important question in the field of technology policy in India is about **checks and balances**. There are questions related to the **kind of data** the government should own and its **surveillance powers** over us.

There is also one big concern about the use of modern computer technology and its impact on our lives.

There is also a need for laws for the **deployment of AI- based systems** to comply with the **Supreme Court right to privacy judgement** for specific use cases such as facial recognition.

A lot of police departments and State governments are using this technology. It comes with **error rates**. This may result in **exclusion, harassment**. So, there needs to be a **level of restraint**.

The government should pay greater attention to the **conversations happening in Europe** around AI and the **risk assessment approach**.

The **presence or absence of competition** in this field is not cause of worry. On a global scale, there are many players. OpenAI and Microsoft collaborating on AI. Facebook is also building in this space. Google also has a big presence.

This shows the extent to which **technical dynamism** generates **checks and balances** of its own. ChatGPT has raised a new level of **competitive dynamics** around Google Search.

Indians are **spectators**. When it comes to issues such face recognition, nobody else is going to solve it for us. India is a poor country where **regulatory and state capacity** is very limited. So, the work done here will generally be of low quality.

The tech landscape is dominated by Big Tech. They have a **computing power advantage, a data advantage, and a geopolitical advantage**.

It is possible that the pre existing firms like Microsoft, Google, Meta may deepen their domination in AI.

**How India 's handling of AI can be compared with China's authoritarian use of AI?**

China has built a **Chinese firewall** and cut off users in China from the Internet. The people connected with the ruling party in China get **monopoly powers** to build products that look like global products.

They steal ideas and then design and make local versions in China. But it also comes at the price of **mediocrity and stagnation**. They're just copying things and not at the frontier. It will not lead to the development of **genuine scientific and technical knowledge**.

So far in India, there is **decent political support for globalisation, integration into the world economy and full participation by foreign companies** in India. **Economic nationalism** is not yet a dominant impulse here. So, there is fundamental superiority in the Indian way.

**Will AI completely replace all existing jobs?**

There should be focus on the **word 'productivity'**. It's good for society when human beings produce more output per unit hour as that makes us more prosperous.

People who lose jobs will see job opportunities multiplying in other areas. The labour market does **relocation of jobs** every day.

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There were 1-2 million jobs operating an STD ISD booth in India. Then mobile phones came and there were apprehensions that millions of people would lose their jobs. In the end, the **productivity of the country** went up.

### 36. [For our world in flux: Some hard lessons in history from the 1930s](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**For our world in flux: Some hard lessons in history from the 1930s**” published in the “**mint**” on **14th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Global economy. GS2- Global politics

**News**– The article explains the prevailing uncertainty in global politics and economy and compare with situation in 1920s

#### **How is the world in a state of flux today?**

**Global politics**– The **geopolitical divides** are sharper than they have been for decades. International relations are **strained**, and there are **several potential flashpoints**.

**Economy**– The coronavirus pandemic prompted **repeated lockdowns** across the world, it led to sharp contraction in output and employment everywhere. The economic recovery has been slow. In many countries, national income in 2022 just about returned to its 2019 levels. The recovery has been **K-shaped**, so **economic inequalities** have continued to rise. The pandemic also disrupted integrated **global production networks**. It stifled **international trade and investment flows**.

The situation might have improved in early 2022. But the **Russia-Ukraine war disrupted global supply-chains** in food, fuels and fertilisers. The sharp rise in food and fuel prices pushed inflation to double-digit levels in most countries.

The response of central banks has been **raising interest rates**. It will **stifle investment and dampen consumption**, instead of curbing inflation.

In fact, the prospect of recession in the world economy looms large. The continuing war Ukraine has **enhanced uncertainty and risk**. It has made markets nervous. Large international firms are **relocating and re-shoring** their production. **Globalisation is at risk**.

**Regional politics**– There are **resurgent nationalisms** due to **populist or chauvinist sentiments**. In rich countries, **nationalist-populist political parties, or far-right xenophobic leaders**, exploit fears about immigration and trade.

In poor countries, **nationalist-populist political parties** exploit **religious beliefs or ethnic divides** to create **identity politics**. Such populist-authoritarian regimes are now present across countries and continents.

#### **What are many strong parallels with the world that existed a century earlier?**

The **preceding era of globalisation** during 1870-1914, was brought to an abrupt end by World War I. In 1918, Spanish Flu caused a worldwide pandemic that cost 50 million lives.

In the 1920s, Europe struggled with **problems of reconstruction, slow growth and hyperinflation**. **Economic inequalities** between and within countries rose. This was conducive to the **rise of nationalism and militarism**. Mussolini captured power in Italy.

Unequal terms in the **Treaty of Versailles** had **economic and political consequences**. In October 1929, the Great Crash in stock markets of the US led into the Great Depression.

Economic troubles led to **political instability** in many parts of the world. The **political uncertainty** led to the **rise of nationalism and militarism** in some countries.

By 1930, the Nazis were the second largest political party in Germany. In 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor. **The Great Depression** also led to the **rise of militarism** in Japan during the 1930s.

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**Economic nationalism** surged almost everywhere as countries adopted ‘**beggar-thy-neighbour**’ policies. They restricted imports to protect domestic output and employment. Both Germany and Japan aspired to a larger role in a world dominated by the US and Great Britain. In this quest, during the late 1930s, Germany pushed Europe closer to World War II. Japan did so in December 1941.

### **What are striking similarities between this past and our present?**

The **financial crisis of 2008** spread worldwide. The **Great Recession** followed in its aftermath **disrupted globalisation**. The covid pandemic was perhaps the last shock for globalisation. **Inequalities in income and wealth** between and within countries are unprecedented. **Slow growth, persistent inflation, and a possible recession** can increase discontent among people. The Ukraine war could have **global implications**. Russia wants to **regain its position**. There is a pronounced **shift in the balance of economic power**, from the West to Asia, and from the US to China.

### [37. India is at the bullseye of climate change’s heat impacting workers — this has economic effects](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**India is at the bullseye of climate change’s heat impacting workers — this has economic effects**” published in **The Times of India** on **15<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Climate Change

**Relevance:** Impact of rising heat

**News:** The article discusses various impacts of rising heat on labour productivity and on economy.

#### **What are the impacts of the heat?**

Heat, humidity and outdoor air pollution may have a health impact on workers working outside. This can have economic impacts on a nation.

#### **Which areas are more affected by the rising heat?**

**Most areas in the tropics or within about 30 degrees of the equator** are getting hotter and more humid on average. Even, mornings and night are getting warmer too. This can have a **series of cascading health impacts**.

#### **How is India impacted by rising heat?**

One of the most intense locations on Earth which is mostly hot and humid is the Indo-Gangetic Plain.

India also has a high number of people working outdoors, doing manual labour in agriculture, construction, etc. which involves working out in the sun, lifting loads and lacking heat protection. Therefore, **In India, there are a lot of people which generates internal body heat and this becomes worse by high heat and humidity**. This ultimately leads to various health impacts.

**Moreover, half of the labour lost to human heat exposure around the world is in India.**

China is also impacted given that its large populations live in eastern China which is low-lying and near the coast where it is hotter and more humid seasonally.

However, from various observations, **India seems the most impacted in terms of lost labour productivity**. This can have economic impact on India.

#### **How is heat and deforestation linked?**

The emission of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is causing global warming and the temperature is expected to increase more in the future.

In such a situation, **deforestation raises temperatures locally because trees conduct photosynthesis and evapotranspiration which cools the surrounding environment**.

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Therefore, across tropical rainforest regions, **there is a strong association between deforestation and temperatures increasing from half a degree to several degrees Celsius** locally.

### **What are some important mitigation measures that can be adopted?**

Some of the measures that can be adopted are – **a)** work hours might be shifted from the hottest hours to cooler periods, **b)** local regulation should be brought up to prevent workers from working during the hottest hours and **c)** workers should be allowed to rest in those periods and their resting place should be in the shade, with cool, clean drinking water available to tackle dehydration.

### 38. Trade data points to slowing global and domestic demand

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Express View: Trade data points to slowing global and domestic demand” published in “The Indian Express” on 15th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian economy

**Relevance-** Issues related to trade

**News-** Trade data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Thursday provides an indication of the headwinds to growth.

### **What are important takeaways from recently released data?**

**India’s merchandise exports and imports** have now declined in three of the last four months.

**Tight financial conditions** across the world have slowed down **global and domestic demand**.

As per the latest data, **merchandise exports** contracted by almost 14% in March and imports fell by around 8%.

### **How was the performance of the export and import sector in fiscal year 2022-23?**

**Merchandise exports** were \$447 billion in 2022-23. It is 6% up from \$422 billion in 2021-22.

If we exclude non-oil exports, exports in the full year were actually lower than the year before. Electronic goods have registered a significant expansion. Rice exports, gems and jewelry, cotton, man-made yarn, textiles as well as engineering goods, have shown poor performance.

If oil and gems and jewelry are excluded, imports in March were lower than in the same period the year before.

The latest data also shows that the **merchandise trade deficit** widened to \$267 billion in 2022-23, from \$191 billion in 2021-22.

### **What is the future scenario of trade in India?**

The **International Monetary Fund** has pegged global growth at 2.8% in 2023, down from 3.4% in 2022. So, exports are likely to come under further pressure in the months ahead.

A **deep contraction in merchandise exports** will slow down the manufacturing sector in India. It will have an impact on **overall domestic economic activity**.

Both exports and imports are likely to remain weak this year. The extent of domestic demand as compared to external demand will determine the country’s **overall current account deficit**.

### 39. Tiger numbers can never tell the whole story

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Tiger numbers can never tell the whole story**” published in **live mint** on **15th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environment – Biodiversity Conservation

**Relevance:** Wildlife Conservation

**News – On 9 April**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the **latest tiger numbers**. We have about **3,167 tigers in India**. The last estimation in 2018 counted **2,967 tigers**.

**What are the genetic variations in Tigers?**

Except for the Western Ghats, these populations are **quite small**, and this is a matter of concern. The tigers in Satkosia have **gone extinct**.

According to the 2018 census, Valmiki has about 30 tigers.

The Simlipal tigers are famed for their **broad black stripes**, rather than the traditional orange-yellow and black.

The 2022 report also points out that the North-East hill tiger population could be the result of **gene flow from the South-East Asian tigers** of Myanmar.

**What are the two main management challenges?**

One is the question of **repopulating reserves** that don't have tigers. In areas like Satkosia, tigers can be brought in, but they have to be from a related genetic cluster.

The second is the **issue of connecting tiger habitats** so tigers can disperse naturally and create viable populations.

**What are the recent amendments to the 1980 Forest (Conservation) Act in this regard?**

The proposed clause suggests that forests around highways, public roads, railways, or public amenities of a certain size **should not be considered forests**. It opens forest areas to non-forest users.

It proposes that the **construction of linear projects within 100 km** of the international border and concerning "strategic" or "national importance", should be exempt from the Act.

**What is the way forward?**

There is a need to make tigers a **cross-cutting concern** with all departments and to bypass forests that have tigers.

The less effective option is to make **roads underground or overhead**, a form of "green infrastructure".

Tiger numbers can only go up if the animal is allowed to walk and then secure its own land. Further, tigers have genetic clusters within India and there is a **need to bolster numbers within these distinct populations**.

40. IT rules are a step towards denying misinformation space on the internet

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**"The 'fact check' is that Indians will have little choice"** published in **The Hindu** on **15th April 2023**.

**"IT rules are a step towards denying misinformation space on the internet"** published in the **Indian Express** on **15th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

**Relevance:** About amendments to IT Rules.

**News:** The government recently notified amendments to Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules.

**About the amendments to IT Rules**

**Read here:** [IT Ministry notifies body to flag 'fake' content about govt](#)

**What is the rationale behind the recent amendment to IT Rules?**

**Regulating misinformation:** Misinformation operations for cyberwarfare by state and non-state actors have utilised social media platforms to create civic unrest and for radicalisation and terror recruitment.

In recent times, Covid misinformation, fake cures, financial market misinformation and AI deep fakes have caused and will cause tremendous social and economic harm.

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**Regulate the state and non-state actor activities:** Attacks from state and non-state actor activities against India have become more sophisticated. For example, **a)** recently, The Washington Post exposed Khalistani elements using bots to conduct misinformation operations against the Indian government, **b)** In 2019, a network of accounts and pages managed by Pakistan's ISPR were engaged in malicious, coordinated activity against India on social media platforms.

**The scale and diversity of India's Internet users:** India's internet users vary from children to the elderly. So, proper regulation of information going on the platform is essential.

**Note:** Rule 3(1)(n) explicitly provides that the fundamental rights of Indian citizens cannot be violated by any platform.

**Lax in the enforcement of older IT rules by intermediaries:** Under Rule (3) of previous IT Rules, there were nine no-go areas for content on social media, if the platforms were to continue to operate with legal immunity under Section 79. These included child sexual abuse material, religious incitement and misinformation.

But, due to new challenges like AI/deep fakes and the proliferation of anonymous users, bots and fake accounts, the social media intermediaries' were sloppy in the implementation of the rule (3). This is creating a situation where no one could be held accountable for the content that was false or illegal.

**Need a fact-checking government body:** This is because **a)** The government was a target of most misinformation operations, **b)** Only the government has access to government data, **c)** any non-governmental entity might not effectively check all the data which is related to government.

**International commitment:** The G20 Leaders **Bali Declaration of 2022** highlighted the need to counter disinformation campaigns as an essential requirement to prevent online threats and promote cyber security.

**Must read:** [Amendment to IT Rules and regulating fake news – Explained, pointwise](#)

**What are the concerns associated with amendments to IT Rules?**

**No safeguards:** Natural justice requires a transparent process, where a person is provided a fair chance of a hearing and given a legal order. No such safeguard exists in the IT Rules, which could result in a black box of government censorship.

**Prevent readers from developing a critical understanding:** With the new powers, the government can take down posts swiftly. Thus making the posts inaccessible not only on social media but also on the website of the news portal. Hence, it will prevent readers from developing a critical understanding through a contestation of facts.

**Against judicial observations:**

-In the **State Of U.P. vs Raj Narain (1975) case**, the court observed that “the claim of the executive to have exclusive and conclusive power to determine what is in public interest is a claim based on the assumption that the executive alone knows what is best for the citizen”.

-In the **R. Rajagopal vs State Of T.N. (1994) case**, the SC observed said that “Our system of Government demands... constant vigilance over exercise of governmental power by the press and the media among others. It is essential for a good Government.”

**Creates mistrust with government:** The design of “fact checking body” which is not insulated, or formed with financial and functional autonomy makes them subservient to government and even political interests.

**Read more:** [Express View on IT Rules amendments: Government sets itself up as judge, jury and executioner](#)

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### 41. [No Trial Is Error – Allow prosecution of soldiers accused of killing innocents](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**No Trial Is Error – Allow prosecution of soldiers accused of killing innocents**” published in **The Times of India** on **15th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Security challenges and their management in border areas.

**Relevance:** About prosecution of soldiers.

**News:** In 2021, a commando unit opened fire and killed six coal miners in a counter-insurgency operation in Oting, Nagaland. Recently, the defence ministry has refused sanction for the prosecution of 30 army commandos allegedly responsible for the Oting massacre. The issue highlighted as the misuse of provisions of AFSPA which give sweeping powers to security personnel.

#### **Why prosecution of soldiers is essential?**

Security forces are forced to operate in difficult, often hostile, terrain. But that shouldn't translate into impunity when grave errors are made.

-Non-prosecution of soldiers will create a sense of injustice which might provide a fillip to the insurgency in the North East.

-Normalisation in the Northeast is directly linked to removal of AFSPA. From April 1, AFSPA is restricted to eight districts of Assam while it has been removed from 19 and 18 police station areas respectively in Manipur and Nagaland. In this situation, by ensuring fair trial and prosecution in the Oting case will increase government's trust.

**Must read:** [Armed Forces Special Powers Act \(AFSPA\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **What should be done?**

Justice has to be provided, especially in the areas where the AFSPA continues to operate.

### 42. [How food inflation can be managed keeping El Nino in mind](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**How food inflation can be managed keeping El Nino in mind**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **17th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Economy

**Relevance-** Inflation related issues

**News-** Reserve Bank of India Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) paused the raising repo rates in its last meeting.

RBI is not blindly following the US Fed in raising interest rates to tame inflation. It reflects RBI's confidence in containing inflation below 6 per cent.

#### **What are the recent numbers on inflation in India?**

The CPI data of March 2023 reveals that inflation has dropped to 5.66%. It is below the **upper limit of 6%**.

This drop in inflation has been significantly brought about by **food inflation**.

However, even in food, inflationary concerns remain high in case of **cereals, milk and milk products**.

#### **What is the future scenario of inflation in India?**

Milk and milk products have the **highest weight in CPI**. Milk production in the country suddenly came to a halt in FY23.

This has been attributed to **lumpy skin disease**. Although the growth in milk production is gaining momentum, it will take time to cool down milk prices.

The **only logical option** in the short term to contain milk prices seems to be reducing import duties on skimmed milk powder and butter to about 15%.



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In the medium to long run, the GoI should **augment good quality fodder supplies** and **raise productivity of milch animals**.

Wheat inflation is still roaring at about 20%. It is likely to come down in the next two months as harvesting and procurement picks up in Punjab-Haryana belt. The **unseasonal rains in March** has created uncertainty about the wheat output.

In this situation, the government can **lower import duties** on wheat and allow imports. There should be ample supplies in the country to avoid any distressed situation.

The **prospect of El Nino** has created a new uncertainty about kharif crops. Several crops could be under stress. However, **rice stocks** in the country are more than three times the buffer stock norms. So, there is no need to panic on that front.

**Edible oil prices** are already collapsing due to **cheaper global prices of palm and other oils**. So, there is no need to worry on that account as well.

But pulses, especially tur and urad, can create problems. So, imports of 2 to 3 mt of kharif pulses by NAFED or through private trade cannot be ruled out.

**What is the way forward for inflation management in India?**

**Knee jerk reaction** when prices go up does more harm than good. A good idea is **developing commodity futures markets**.

India needs to invest in **building trust in futures markets**. There is a need to **improve their efficiency with information symmetry**. **Bringing transparency** through **better technologies and regulatory institutions** needs to be a priority.

The RBI and Centre jointly need to **enhance their tool kit** to contain inflation below 5%.

### 43. On democratising tiger conservation

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**On democratising tiger conservation**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **15th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Environment

**Relevance**– Conservation and protection of species

**News**– The tiger number was recently released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is the minimum estimate based on the tigers photographed during the survey.

**What are issues faced in conserving the tigers in India?**

India is now losing tigers in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, the Eastern ghats and from the Northeastern forests. **Genetic diversity unique to these geographical regions** is lost. It is not good for maintaining **long-term population viability and natural recovery**.

A tool that is being used to overcome this reduction in tiger numbers is to **reintroduce tigers from central Indian forests**. However, if this is done too often, re-introduction will **homogenise tiger genetic structure** across the country. This needs to be looked at more seriously.

**Why does the current approach to tiger conservation in India need to have a relook?**

The tiger was considered an “**umbrella species**”. Saving the tiger meant saving the entire ecosystem. Habitats that have the highest tiger numbers are typically those with a **high prey abundance**.

But in the absence of **proper scientific oversight**, the focus stayed on **boosting tiger numbers** rather than their habitat. The most common interventions were to **manipulate ecosystems** to support high densities of the tiger’s principal prey species.

In most cases, this involved **improving habitat for the cheetal**. It also required provisioning water. This has resulted in the “**cheetalification**” of tiger reserves.

**For example**, in the Kanha Tiger Reserve, the explosion in the cheetal population resulted in the habitat becoming **unsuitable for the endangered barasingha**, which depends on tall grass.

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Managers then had to create **enclosures free of cheetal** so that the barasingha could reproduce and their numbers recover.

In other parks, the excessive provisioning of water during the dry season led to **reduced natural, climate driven variations** in populations of wildlife. This is likely to have unknown and unintended consequences for these habitats in the long-term.

### **What are issues related to the policy framework for conservation of species in India?**

Conservation in India depends entirely on a **network of Protected Areas**. This is an **exclusive conservation model** and suffers from a “**sarkaar**” complex. Ordinary Indians, especially those living closest to wildlife have very little say in conservation.

The WLPA is a **restrictive law**. It describes in great detail what you can't do. However, the law and associated policies have done very little to **enable conservation**.

There is **no policy framework and incentive** for ordinary citizens to aid in conservation. As a result, conservation has not **reached beyond these PAs**.

In other countries, natural lands are owned or managed by individuals, communities, farmers, ranchers, corporates, charities, and the government. Each one of them is **incentivised to conserve** these lands according to their interests.

As a result, **several conservation models** operate simultaneously. But in India, all natural habitats are managed by one agency. The approach to conservation is **singular, and exclusive**.

### **What is the way forward for species conservation in India?**

India needs to **have frameworks** that allow local communities, citizens, scientists, non-governmental organisations, and businesses to **participate meaningfully in conservation**.

Large tracts of forest land are “Reserved Forests” under the jurisdiction of State Forest Departments. Such areas can be **co-managed with an inclusive approach**. It also provides economic benefits for local communities.

In many landscapes, degraded agricultural lands adjoining these forest areas can be restored to **enhance connectivity between Protected Areas**.

#### [44. The Indian economy, across sectors, is dominated by duopolies](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The Indian economy, across sectors, is dominated by duopolies**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **17th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Economy

**Relevance**– Structure of the economy

**News**– The article discusses the issues of monopoly in Indian markets.

#### **What is the nature of market concentration in the manufacturing sector?**

**Automobile sector**- It in India is **dominated by Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai**. Both are foreign-owned. Together, they account for **six out of every 10 cars sold** in the country.

If Tata Motors is added, these three players control almost **70% of the total car market**. It is the third largest player. Mahindra which ranks fourth in terms of market share

**Two-wheelers segment**. Three players — Hero MotoCorp, Honda and TVS Motor — account for nearly **three-fourths of the total market**. Two of these – Hero and TVS – are Indian-owned and Honda is a subsidiary of a Japanese firm.

**Gadgets segment**– The **mobile phone market** in India is dominated by the Chinese brands Xiaomi, Vivo and Realme, and Samsung.

Vivo, Realme, Oneplus and Oppo are reportedly linked to the same Chinese company. Together these companies controlled roughly **70% of the market in 2022**.

The **smart TV market** is similarly dominated by the likes of Xiaomi, Samsung and LG.

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Similar patterns can be observed in other **consumer appliance markets** as well as in various segments of the **FMCG market**.

**Core infrastructure-** Indian players exercise more control here. **In steel**, the four biggest companies — JSW Steel, SAIL, Tata Steel and JSPL — control **more than half the market**. Three of these are domestic private-sector firms, while one is a public-sector enterprise.

Similarly, the **four biggest Indian cement firms** command **half of the market share** in the country.

**Other areas-** Such examples of market concentration can also be seen in other segments, especially in **certain commodities and related segments**.

The **lines of demarcation between foreign and domestic players** across markets are not exactly clear. There are examples of companies such as Asian Paints, Amul and Pidilite who hold a commanding position in markets where foreign competition is limited.

There are **state-sanctioned monopolies** in the **provision of utilities** such as electricity and water. These markets are largely the preserve of the public sector.

**What is the nature of concentration of ownership in the service sector?**

**Similar patterns of market concentration** can be observed here. **Online markets** tend to be dominated by foreign players or by firms heavily financed by foreign funds. **Other service segments** are more tilted towards domestic players.

**The telecom sector** is dominated by two large players called Jio and Airtel and a weak third player. Together, Jio and Airtel account for more than two-thirds of the market. Both are controlled by Indian promoters.

**The airline industry** is also now dominated by two players — Indigo and Tata. The two airline groups accounted for more than **80% of the domestic market share** in the current year.

In the **private banking space**, HDFC, ICICI and AXIS account for a significant share. All of them have **sizable foreign ownership**. Concentration is also evident in airports and ports.

Similar patterns can be observed in **online markets** as well. The **retail market** is dominated by Amazon and Flipkart. The **payments market** has been cornered by PhonePe and Google Pay.

**Food delivery** is split between Zomato and Swiggy; and **transportation** between Ola and Uber. Most of these companies are either foreign-owned or majorly backed by foreign players.

**What are the impacts of market monopolies?**

The concentration of ownership in the hands of a few big firms has been linked to **higher prices for consumers, a declining share of labour income and rising wage inequality**.

There is also the possibility of the more dominant firms **influencing government policy** to restrict **competition**. This can be done by **high entry barriers and distorting the playing field to the disadvantage of their competitors**.

This can be achieved by **raising import duties, tight regulations or licensing requirements, changing the rules of the game to restrict competitors or even making it difficult to sign beneficial free trade agreements**.

45. [Blink, It's Not Gone – Ecommerce labour protests speak to the larger problem of not enough regular non-farm jobs](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Blink, It's Not Gone – Ecommerce labour protests speak to the larger problem of not enough regular non-farm jobs**” published in **The Times of India** on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Growth and Development

**Relevance:** concerns associated with gig platforms

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**News:** The delivery executive of Blinkit has gone on strike in the National Capital Region. The strike is over Blinkit's revised rates and benefits that drastically reduce minimum earnings on orders.

### **What are the issues with tech-driven commerce platforms?**

Most of the commerce platforms **aren't profitable and depend on investor capital.**

When investors demand profits or cash runs thin, these companies cut pay and benefits for their delivery executives. This ultimately affects the earnings of delivery agents and makes gig jobs less attractive.

### **Why are gig jobs preferred in India?**

People often prefer gig platforms due to **the lack of steady non-farm jobs.**

As per **Periodic Labour Force Survey 2021-22**, most additional jobs in the country are being created in the self-employed category. **This implies that there are not enough salaried jobs.**

Hence, the young workforce in India is left with the choice between accepting low-paying gig work with poor working conditions or returning to their villages for unproductive farm work.

### **What can be the way ahead?**

The **economy needs to create many more regular jobs for the burgeoning workforce, especially in the manufacturing and services sectors.** This will provide better working conditions for the young workforce.

## 46. [Dealing with extreme heat](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article **"Dealing with extreme heat"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **17th April 2023.**

**Syllabus:** GS3- Disaster and disaster management

**Relevance-** Heat waves and stress

**News-** The article explains the increasing heat distress in India.

### **What are some data and facts associated with heat stress in India?**

**Around 350 million Indians** were exposed to strong heat stress between April and May 2022. Between 1990 and 2019, summer temperatures **on average rose by 0.5-0.9°C** across districts in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan. Around **54% of India's districts** have also seen a similar rise in winter temperatures.

Between 2021 and 2050, it is expected that the **maximum temperature will rise by 2-3.5°C** in 100 districts and by **1.5- 2°C** in around 455 districts. Similarly, winter temperatures will **rise between 1°C and 1.5°C** in around 485 districts.

Indian cities are impacted by **urban heat island effect.** Temperatures are **4-12°C higher** than rural outlying areas. Humidity has exacerbated the felt temperature.

More recently, Northern India has seen significant **variability in the weather.** Cold weather in January was followed by a heat wave in February and early March, and hailstorm and heavy rain in the past few weeks.

### **What are the impacts of heat stress?**

**Weather variability** has **consequences for agriculture.** For example, 90% of India's cumin production is from Gujarat and Rajasthan. The recent weather variability has destroyed the majority of the cumin crop in Rajasthan.

Rising temperatures have also led to **unliveable cities.** For labourers, **heat exposure** leads to a loss of 162 hours per year, as per one study.

A rise in temperatures directly **impacts labour productivity.** About 50% of India's workforce is estimated to be exposed to heat during their working hours. This includes marginal farmers, labourers at construction sites and street vendors and gig economy workers.

**What is the way forward to mitigate the challenges related to heat waves distress?**

**Greening** could help mitigate part of the problem. Ideally, for every urban citizen in India, there should be **at least seven trees in the urban landscape**.

Development plans for Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities should increase **urban surface area that is permeable**. The push should be on **increasing the density and area of urban forests**.

**Expanding wetlands and restoring dead and decaying lakes** may also help ensure **ecological functioning** along with reducing urban heat.

There is a need to reduce the **urban heat island effect**. This will require a push for **greater usage of permeable materials** in civic infrastructure and residential construction.

Urban layouts such as **brick jalis for ventilation and terracotta tiles** to allow hot air to escape may be considered. Curbing **anthropogenic heat emissions** from vehicles and factories will be helpful.

**Urban building standards** should be upgraded to avoid usage of **heat-absorbent galvanised iron and metal roof sheets**. Using **cleaner cooking fuels** will reduce indoor air pollution. It may also help reduce urban heat. **Streets with low ventilation** may need further expansion.

Other measures can also be considered. These are embracing **public transportation, reducing personal vehicle usage and reducing the size of landfills**.

Methane production from mountainous landfills may lead to fires. It increases the **urban heat and weather variability** in our cities. **Waste segregation**, along with **solid waste management** at source, can be helpful.

There is a need to **improve forecasting ability**. It includes the potential impact of heat on food production.

**Current econometric models** associated with food inflation primarily look at the **variability in the monsoon, minimum support prices and vegetable prices**. **Local heat trends** need to be added, given their impact of heat on food production, storage and sale.

There is a need for **detailed policies and guidelines on weather variability and urban heat management** at the State, district, city and municipality ward levels.

The **urban design of Chandigarh** is an example. It considers climate responsiveness as a key factor. A large green belt of mango trees was also planted around the city to reduce urban sprawl and to serve as a **buffer between the residential city and the industrial suburbs**.

Sukhna lake was constructed to help in cooling the city, while small water bodies were developed near large buildings. Parks were planned out in every sector, along with tree plantations alongside all the major roads. **Large forest areas** were also reserved.

### [47. How coastal species are living on plastic debris in the ocean](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**How coastal species are living on plastic debris in the ocean**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **18th April 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Environment

**Relevance**– Issues related to marine life and marine pollution

**News**– Recently, a study published by researchers from Canada, the Netherlands, and the U.S. have reported that coastal lifeforms have colonised plastic items in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

**What are some facts about the Anthropocene epoch?**

This is the name some scientists have proposed for a **new period in history**. It is characterized by the **influence of Homo sapiens** on the **planet’s geology and ecosystems**.

Scientists are still not clear when this **epoch really began**. Some candidates include the **first nuclear weapon test and rapid industrialisation after the Second World War**.

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Some link it with the **creation of plastic trash** which is abundant in our urban refuse, rivers, and forests.

### What are some facts about the great pacific garbage patch?

There are some water currents in the ocean that form loops. These are **called gyres**.

The **North Pacific Subtropical Gyre** is located just north of the equator in the Pacific Ocean. It consists of the **Kuroshio, North Pacific, California, and North Equatorial currents** and moves in a clockwise direction.

These currents flow **adjacent to 51 Pacific Rim countries**. Any trash that enters one of these currents, from any of these countries, could become part of the gyre.

Inside this gyre lies a **long east-west strip**. Here, some of the debris in these currents has collected over the years. The eastern part of this is the **Great Pacific Garbage Patch**. It is estimated to be **1.6 million sq. km big and more than 50 years old**.

It contains an **estimated 45,000-1,29,000 metric tonnes of plastic**. It is predominantly **in the form of microplastics**. The more visible objects that haven't yet broken down into smaller particles accounted for **92% of the plastics in 2018**.

### What are the findings of the study?

The **tsunami off the Japanese coast in 2011** contributed to the debris in this garbage patch. Researchers had found debris on the West coast of North America containing live life forms originally found in Japan.

From November 2018 to January 2019, researchers collected 105 pieces of plastic debris from the eastern part of the NPSG. Based on the study, *98% of the debris* items had **invertebrate organisms**.

They also found that **pelagic species (species of the open ocean)** were present on 94.3% of them and **coastal species** on 70.5%.

They found organisms belonging to **46 taxa**. While 37 of them were coastal, the rest were pelagic. Among both **coastal and pelagic organisms, crustaceans** were the most common.

The coastal species were most commonly found on fishing nets whereas the pelagic species on crates.

Nearly all taxa were of **Northwest Pacific origin**, including Japan. Most debris items (85.7%) did not have **identifiable markings** linked to origin, such as manufacture locations or company/brand names.

The researchers also found that 68% of the coastal taxa and 33% of the pelagic taxa **reproduced asexually**. There was evidence of **sexual reproduction** among the hydroids and the crustaceans. They reported a strong **positive correlation between reproduction and mobility**.

### What is the relevance of the findings of the study?

The introduction of species on plastic items has given rise to a **new kind of standing coastal community** in the open ocean. Researchers have named it the **neopelagic community**.

The **neopelagic community** is not misplaced from other areas of the oceans but lives on plastic items in the garbage patch, including reproducing there.

As per another study **polyethylene films** had chemically bonded with rocks in China. This is reminiscent of the **“anthropoquinas” of Brazil** (sedimentary rocks embedded with plastic earrings) and the **“plastiglomerates” of Hawaii** (beach sediment + organic debris + basaltic lava + melted plastic).

### 48. [There are fresh signs that power distribution has turned a corner](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**There are fresh signs that power distribution has turned a corner**” published in **Mint** on **18<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Infrastructure**

**Relevance:** **About the condition of Discoms**

**News:** The article explains the problems faced by the Discoms and measures that have improved their conditions.

#### **What are the problems faced by India’s power distribution sector?**

India’s power distribution sector has faced **multiple structural problems**.

Most distribution utilities (discoms) have suffered from increasing aggregate technical and commercial (**AT&C**) losses, **widening financial losses** and **growing debt burdens**.

Tariff revision in several states has lagged behind the increase in electricity prices, ultimately **leading to growing disparities between supply costs and income**.

This has made discoms unable to make timely payments to generation and transmission companies, and lagging investments in long-term infrastructure.

However, **the 11th Integrated Ratings and Ranking report** on discoms released by the Union Power Ministry suggests that conditions of discoms are improving.

#### **What are the findings of the 11th Integrated Ratings report?**

Despite an 8% increase in total gross input energy, the gap between expenditure and income on a cash-adjusted basis (**ACS-ARR Gap**) **reduced substantially** to ₹53,000 crore in 2021-22 compared to ₹97,000 crore in 2019-20.

Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal were the major contributing states.

The sector wide cash-adjusted **ACS-ARR gap per unit has improved** to 40 paise, down from 79 paise in 2019-20 and 89 paise in 2020-21.

**AT&C losses reduced** to 16.5% in 2021-22, lower than 19.5% in 2019-20 and 21.5% in 2020-21. Bill collection efficiency increased by over 3% to reach 96% in 2021-22.

While the **sector’s debt level is high, the rate of increasing debt is reducing**. The average debt service coverage ratio for the sector also turned positive.

#### **What has led to this improvement?**

This is because of the [Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme \(RDSS\)](#).

Further, several state governments have also taken proactive actions. They have provided close to ₹56,000 crore of equity, via **capital grants for loan takeovers**, in the past three years.

**State governments paid out 100% of the tariff subsidy amount** for 2021-22, as well as clearing certain backlogs.

**Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab** are the states that have shown most improvement in subsidy disbursal.

**Discoms have also taken significant steps by replacing physical bill generation and payment with digital billing and online payments to ease collections**.

The majority have shifted to **Ind-AS accounting standards**.

#### **What more can be done to improve the condition of discoms?**

**Adopting certain rules and practices:** Reforms like the **Late Payment Surcharge Rules 2022** and the requirement for **energy accounting and auditing** may be crucial in resolving AT&C losses and paying off transmission company debt.

**Efforts by Discoms:** Discoms must adopt improved accounting practices like adopt Ind-AS, prepare quarterly accounts, and conduct energy audits. They also need **enhanced data**

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**analytics capabilities** to leverage smart infrastructure and identify opportunities to reduce AT&C losses.

It is also important to expedite capital projects for a wider smart-meter rollout, and to strengthen the system utilizing RDSS funds.

**Efforts by State Govt.: State governments must disburse full tariff subsidy amounts and clear past arrears in a timely manner.** Regulators must also ensure timely issuance of cost-reflective tariff orders.

### 49. [Express View on Oting killings case in Nagaland: A betrayal of the promise of justice](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**“Express View on Oting killings case in Nagaland: A betrayal of the promise of justice”** published in the **Indian Express** on **18th April 2023**.

**“Promoting impunity – Denial of nod to prosecute Army men in Oting massacre is disconcerting”** published in **The Hindu** on **18th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Security challenges and their management in border areas.

**Relevance:** About non-prosecution of soldiers.

**News:** Recently, the defence ministry has refused sanction for the prosecution of 30 army commandos allegedly responsible for the Oting incident.

#### **About the Oting incident**

In 2021, a commando unit allegedly opened fire and killed six coal miners in a counter-insurgency operation in Oting, Nagaland.

Following that, the Nagaland government formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the incident. The Army announced its own investigation and promised action against the guilty, irrespective of their rank.

The SIT indicted 30 members of the Army unit involved in the operation and filed a chargesheet in 2022. The team sought sanction for prosecution from the Defence Ministry’s Department of Military Affairs. However, the legal process was held up since the Centre had to sanction the prosecution of the indicted Army personnel.

**Note:** Prior sanction to prosecute Army personnel is necessary under Section 6 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA).

**Must read:** [Armed Forces Special Powers Act \(AFSPA\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **How does the non-prosecution of soldiers erode the Centre’s reputation?**

**It is nearly impossible to fix accountability when personnel are involved in criminal acts:**

These aspects have been flagged repeatedly in Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Assam and Nagaland, which have experienced the worst of AFSPA in operation.

**Create a misconception that AFSPA is used to promote impunity:** The non-prosecution might create a view that the Centre is unable or unwilling to do anything about impunity in insurgency-hit States.

**Read more:** [No Trial Is Error – Allow prosecution of soldiers accused of killing innocents](#)

#### **What should be done?**

The government must demonstrate its commitment to peace in the region and justice for the victims by either granting sanction for their prosecution, or taking exemplary action based on the findings of the military court of inquiry.



50. [In Maharashtra heatstroke deaths, the critical factor of humidity](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**In Maharashtra heatstroke deaths, the critical factor of humidity**” published in the **Indian Express** on **18th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS-3: Disaster Management.

**Relevance:** About the impact of heatstrokes.

**News:** Recently, thirteen people have died from an apparent heatstroke while attending a government award function in an open space in Navi Mumbai. This is possibly the biggest-ever heatwave-related death toll from a single event in the country.

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

HEAT-LINKED DEATHS	
Year	Deaths
2010	269
2011	12
2012	729
2013	1,433
2014	548
2015	2,040
2016	1,111
2017	384
2018	25
2019	226
2020	4
2021	4
2022	33

*Compiled from Ministry of Earth Sciences, NDMA and Ministry of Health*

**Source:** Indian Express

In the 10 years between 2010 and 2020, reported heatwave-related deaths in India came down by more than 90%. States and district administrations started implementing heat action plans around 2015. The recent increase in heatwave-related deaths could also be because of improved monitoring and reporting of incidents.

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

### How heatstroke can be fatal?

High temperature in itself is not fatal. The combination of high temperature and high humidity is referred to as the wet bulb temperature. This makes heat waves deadly.

High moisture content in the atmosphere makes it difficult for sweat to evaporate and bodies to cool down. This increases internal body temperature and is often fatal.

### How does heatstroke impact productivity?

Read more: [Do not let increasing heatwaves sap worker productivity in India](#)

### What can be done to mitigate the impact of heatstrokes during political gatherings?

**Timely medical intervention is extremely important:** Political parties are supposed to ensure that water, oral rehydration solutions (ORS) packets, medical kits, and mobile ambulances are readily available at all such events. These advisories are relevant for Karnataka, which is in the midst of an election

**Follow the Election Commission's advisory on precautions:** Electoral officers were advised to ensure that every polling booth had provisions for drinking water, functional clean toilets, facilities for people to sit, some areas under shade, and essential medical kits.

**Implement state action plans:** Almost every vulnerable state now has a heat action plan in place. This plan has to be followed in letter and spirit.

**Proper implementation:** The local administration needs to be vigilant and pro-active. And the implementation needs to be monitored by higher authorities on a daily basis.

### [51. Two Apples Of Our Eye – Manufacturing vs services is a false binary for India. We need both. But why we need them is not properly understood](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Two Apples Of Our Eye – Manufacturing vs services is a false binary for India. We need both. But why we need them is not properly understood**” published in **The Times of India** on **19th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

**Relevance:** About the reasons to prefer manufacturing or services.

**News:** The India visit of Apple boss and two recent data points have re-ignited a simmering debate on manufacturing vs services. India has seen a dramatic 55% increase in the exports of electronics finished products.

On the other end, there has been a significant rise in the export of services not only from the IT sector alone but also from legal, medical, and MNC back-offices. So, experts have said India should focus more on services. This raises debate on what India should focus on, manufacturing or services?

### Why India should prefer manufacturing or services?

**Manufacturing is not a massive job-creator like Services:** China, the largest factory in the world, with a manufacturing output of \$5 trillion, employs around 83 million workers in manufacturing. In China, despite its monster manufacturing capacities, half of its workers are employed in services.

In contrast, India, with a manufacturing output of around \$500 billion, employs between 27 million and 62 million workers. A study has found that manufacturing employment declined from 51 million in 2016-17 to 27 million in 2020-21.

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Another study found that hi-end jobs, especially in the hi-tech sectors, have a much bigger multiplier effect on jobs created than low-tech jobs. In short, services industries tend to create more hi-tech jobs than relatively low-tech, low-skilled manufacturing assemblies.

**Manufacturing is crucial to keep the trade deficit low:** High-performing services and limited manufacturing will lead to the trade deficit. This is because most services are non-tradable in nature and the country will depend on imports largely for manufactured items. So, countries that have limited manufacturing capacities also tend to have structural current account deficits (CAD).

For example, The UK and the US. Since they are developed they have enormous access to a reserve currency and more policy options to deal with structural CAD. But this is not feasible for emerging markets (EM) like India. CAD forces a trade-off between economic stability and income growth.

### **What India should prefer, manufacturing or services?**

India needs both manufacturing and services. This is because,

**To reduce CAD:** India's CAD has been a perpetual policy constraint for the country since its independence. Despite the record growth in service exports and the spectacular emergence of electronics exports, India ended 2022-23 with a CAD of around 2% of GDP. So, India needs to have larger manufacturing capacities with market access to do away with CAD constraints.

**To reduce risks of supply chains:** India's high dependence on China for API (a key ingredient in pharmaceutical manufacturing) or rare earth minerals (critical for a range of industries) or industrial intermediates for strategic electronic products presents large, un-diversifiable risks. Even during Covid, the developed countries ringfenced vaccine supplies. Hence, India should focus on manufacturing along with the focus on services.

## 52. We need an action plan to deploy India's demographic advantage

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"We need an action plan to deploy India's demographic advantage"** published in **Mint** on **20<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Inclusive Growth**

**Relevance:** **concerns associated with inclusive growth and measures needed.**

**News:** The issues in India which receive less attention are children education, skilling youth for better-quality jobs, and restoring the female labour force participation rate.

### **Why are these issues important?**

They affect India's ability to achieve desired growth. It has also been observed that the wage growth of listed companies has been increasing, despite low number of jobs created by them.

**This increases disparities.**

Further, **India's Phillips Curve has steepened.** This reflects a lack of adequate skilled labour and a lack of adequate upgrading of labour skills for the formal sector.

Due to this, India is creating too few jobs relative to the size of its labour force.

### **What are the other reasons that affect India's growth?**

**Agriculture:** There are many **low-skilled labourers in agriculture.** As per the **World Bank**, India's agricultural labour force share was at 45% in 2020, despite the sector's share in GDP is less than 20%.

**Education:** Educational gaps become hindrance to the development of high skilled labour. The educational gaps exist in spite of a steady improvement in school enrolments in India since 2006 and measures for educating the girl child.

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**Female labour participation rate:** Pandemic has impacted India's female labour participation. As per the data, **it has declined from 18% in 2016 to 11% in 2022, and to under 7% in urban areas.**

Even data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (**PLFS**) shows that female labour force participation is low in an absolute sense and also relative to most peer countries.

**What can be done to address these issues?**

**First**, the proportion of low-wage agricultural work must be reduced and turned into higher-wage, better-skilled employment.

This can be done by – **a)** raising the sector's presently subsidized costs of inputs to market prices, **b) allow foreign entry into the sector** and increase its productivity by lowering tariffs, **c)** reducing the number of agricultural labour by training the youth for vocational skills in manufacturing and services.

**Second**, the large primary education gaps created in children's learning during the pandemic need to be decisively addressed.

This can be done by – **a)** delivering a **grade-by-grade national curriculum** for a 30-day remedial summer programme and another enriched 30-day start-of-the-year boot camp for reinforcement, **b)** ASER-style surveys could be conducted at pre-summer, end-of-summer and exit-of-boot-camp stages to assess success and identify remaining gaps, **c) STEM education** should be encouraged at secondary schooling levels in public schools, with screening based on entrance tests.

**Third**, it is necessary to make it easier for women to join and remain in the labour force, especially in urban areas.

This can be done by utilizing **Corporate Social Responsibility** of the companies to – **a)** Support for entities that provide education to the girl child and skilling to the young female population; **b)** maternity leaves and primary caregiver relief for spouses will provide the flexibility for mothers in resuming work; and, **c) setting up of quality childcare facilities in company premises** or neighborhoods to reduce the domestic burdens of working women.

### [53. A competition law that clicks for all](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**A competition law that clicks for all**" published in **Business Standard** on **20<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Economy

**Relevance:** concerns associated with the Digital Competition Law

**News:** The government has constituted a committee in February 2023 to examine the need for a separate law on competition in digital markets.

**What are the arguments in support of the separate competition law for digital markets?**

The proponents of a separate competition law for digital markets (**SCLDM**) argue that entities in **digital markets enjoy increasing returns and have a huge repository of data.**

This might allow them **to gain a monopolistic position in the market and engage in abusive practices such as market denial and the creation of entry barriers.**

As a result, **the idea is for a SCLDM that is based on ex ante rules and places specific requirements on systemically significant digital intermediaries (SIDIs).**

However, the proposed idea to have separate competition law for digital markets may not be appealing.

**Why is separate competition law for digital markets not a good step?**

**First**, market failure usually arises from distortions in the choices made by producers and consumers. **The distortion occurs when an economic activity is placed on a different level than others.**

Hence, different laws for physical markets and digital markets **would distort the level playing field and thereby contribute to market failure.**

**Second**, digital markets are not different from physical markets in terms of competition. The sources of dominance, such as increasing returns to scale and data repositories, are not unique to digital markets.

Similarly, **abuses like denial of markets and entry barriers are equally prevalent in physical and digital markets.** The remedies like ex-ante regulations and obligations on large enterprises are equally relevant in both physical and digital markets.

Therefore, it is difficult to define digital markets and distinguish them from physical markets.

**Third**, newer kinds of markets keep emerging with time and technological advancements. Hence, **it would be never ending as lawmaking cannot match the speed of technological changes.**

Further, there are governance norms that disincentivize entities from abusing their dominance and entities cannot use their huge repository of data because they do not own it.

Thus, concerns, which are broadly similar in digital markets as in physical markets, are being addressed, as they emerge, without having a separate law.

**Fourth**, the case for SCLDM rests on the issue that an entity in digital markets may become dominant faster. However, **this is irrelevant as dominance ceased** to be a concern with the repeal of the **Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969.**

Moreover, instead of prohibiting dominance, competition law prohibits abuse of dominance. The **Competition Act, 2002**, prohibits the abuse of dominance by a dominant enterprise, and defines who is “dominant” and what is “abusive”.

However, **such definitions could be obsolete as market structure changes** with time.

### **What can be the way ahead?**

The existing competition law could adopt a similar approach to the prohibition of fraudulent and unfair trade practices (PFUTP) adopted in the securities markets.

Further, **if Digital Competition Law is being considered** then it is necessary that it digitalises the processes relating to compliance, monitoring, surveillance, investigation, enforcement, and appeals under the competition law.

### 54. India's fighter jet conundrum

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**India's fighter jet conundrum**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **21st April 2023.**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Internal Security – Defense Technologies

**Relevance**– Issues related to armed forces

**News**– The article explains issues related with the squadron strength of the air force.

### **What is the present and upcoming scenario of squadron strength of the Indian air force?**

Indian air force has today **31 squadrons against the sanctioned strength of 42 fighter squadrons.** It won't go up in the next decade but can go further down by 2029.

If current orders are delivered, and the case for **114 Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA)** has progressed, India can have 29 to 31 squadrons by 2030.

The three **Mig-21 squadrons** will be phased out by 2025. Also, the **Jaguars, Mirage-2000s and Mig-29s** will begin going out by the end of the decade.

By 2027-28 the first of the MIG-29s will start going out. By early 2040s, most of these types will be phased out, some of the earlier batch of SU-30s will also start going out.

The future squadron strength will depend on the 83 Light Combat Aircraft MK1A, LCA-MK2 and MRFA. The decision on MRFA is essential to arrest this drawdown.

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### What are the future procurement plans for fighter jets?

The IAF has in total contracted **272 SU-30s**. A deal to procure **12 additional SU-30MKIs and 21 additional MIG-29s** from Russia has been struck.

Increasing the low availability rates of Su-30 and other fighters in service will offset some of the shortfalls in the interim. However, that could be potentially impacted due to the **Ukraine war**.

India has an ambitious plan for the **acquisition of over 500 fighter jets**. A bulk of them are **indigenously designed and manufactured**. However, these are at various stages of development. Their manufacturing and timely deliveries are critical.

The **fifth generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft** is awaiting CCS sanction. The development of it would take 10 years after sanction. The project cost of AMCA is estimated to be around ₹15,000 crore.

The RFI for **114 MRFA** was issued in April 2019 to global aircraft manufacturers. But there has been no progress. The project is yet to receive the **Acceptance of Necessity**, the starting point of the procurement process.

The MRFA is a reincarnation of the earlier **Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA)** contest for 126 jets.

### What are some facts about the India LCA programme?

The LCA was originally intended as a **Mig-21 replacement**. It has seen a series of delays and has now come back on track.

The LCA achieved **Initial Operation Clearance (IOC)** in December 2013 and **Final Operational Clearance (FOC)** in February 2019.

In February 2020, the Defence Ministry signed a **₹48,000 crore deal with HAL for 83 LCA-MK1A**. HAL will be delivering the first three aircraft in 2024 and 16 aircraft per year for the subsequent five years.

A more capable and larger **LCA-MK2** received sanction from the Cabinet Committee on Security in September 2022 at a **total cost of ₹9000 crore**. It is expected to be ready for production by 2027.

The LCA-MK2 will be **like the Mirage-2000 in terms of capability**. There is also a **Twin Engine Deck Based Fighter** on the drawing board for the Navy's aircraft carriers. The TEDBF is expected to take its first flight by 2026 and be ready for production by 2031.

The LCA project has seen long delays. It has also evolved in tune with the **changing technological requirements**.

What the IAF is flying today is very different from what was actually conceived at that point of time. The one we are flying today is called **federated architecture**. Any new weapon or any new system can be integrated much more easily.

[55. Centre's interest-free loan facility provides space for states to increase capital expenditure. Will they?](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“Centre's interest-free loan facility provides space for states to increase capital expenditure. Will they?”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **21st April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy – Fiscal Policies

**News**– In recent months, there have been two significant developments relating to state governments' finances. **First**, a moderation in state governments' off-budget borrowing, and **second**, better than expected utilisation of the funds under the central government's capex loan scheme.

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**What are changes made by the central government in case of off-budget borrowings by states?**

**State governments' off-budget borrowings** were earlier not subject to strict oversight by the Centre. This allowed states to push some borrowings off-budget.

However, as per guidelines issued by the Centre in 2021-22, **incremental off-budget debt** for the year would need to be adjusted **over four years between 2023-2026**.

Further, off-budget borrowings after this period would be considered as **borrowings made by the state itself**.

**What are the provisions made by the central government in case of interest free capex loans?**

The Centre has released Rs 812 billion to states under the **"Special Assistance as Loan to States for Capital Expenditure" scheme (interest-free capex loans)** in 2022-23. This is higher than the amount indicated in the **Centre's revised estimates**.

For the ongoing year, the Centre has further enhanced the allocation under the **interest-free capex loan** to the states to Rs 1.3 trillion. This loan is over and above the **normal borrowing limit** for the year.

There was **back-ended utilisation of the capex loan** in 2022-23. 30% of the total amount for 2022-23 was disbursed to states in March. So, the Union government seems to have **tightened the guidelines** for the scheme.

Around **two-thirds of the capex loan** will be **untied in nature**, and it will be released in instalments.

**Why has the central government changed the provisions related to interest free capex loans?**

Centre intends for these funds **to supplement, not finance budgeted capex**. Recent years have seen lower-than-budgeted capital spending by many states.

The increased allocation for the interest-free capex loan scheme would support state governments in **funding their capital spending** this year.

The full utilization of these funds by states will cover the impact of **the scheduled reduction in the borrowing limit and drop in the GST compensation**.

Faster identification of projects under this scheme could result in a less **back-ended disbursement** of funds. This will also have a bearing on the borrowing requirement of states.

**What are issues with state fiscal public finances?**

There is a **divergence** in states' **actual monthly borrowings** against the **indicative amount**. So, it is difficult to gauge their **underlying fiscal health**. This suggests that states are unable to project their **borrowing requirement accurately in advance**.

States' **ability to scale up execution** will be critical to ensure the **full utilisation of the capex loan**. **Spending patterns** may be influenced by assembly elections in states.

### [56. A mega-science project bound to put India on the map for cutting-edge research](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **"A mega-science project bound to put India on the map for cutting-edge research"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **21st April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Science and Technology

**News**– Union Cabinet approved the full budget for the LIGO-India mega-science project. It includes the construction, commissioning and joint scientific operation of a state-of-the-art, advanced LIGO in India.

### **How will LIGO-India projects be beneficial for the country?**

The LIGO-India Observatory will enhance **global capability** in the **emergent field of gravitational-wave astronomy and astrophysics (A&A)**.

LIGO-India will also prompt Indian S&T in academia, national laboratories and industries to develop a **range of cutting-edge technologies** of national relevance.

LIGO-India will **bring together** researchers in fundamental and applied sciences from national research laboratories, IITs and IISERs, universities and the industry on a **common platform**. This will also attract talent from the large pool of Indian researchers spread worldwide.

**The synergy** with the quantum sensing and metrology vertical of the National Mission for Quantum Technology and Application holds high promise for India to take lead in the future of **Gravitational wave detectors**.

The project will galvanise India Inc to **enhance capability and capacity to engineer and manufacture complex components** with precision. Clearly, the commissioning of LIGO-India will enhance the **reputation of Indian industry**.

### **What are the benefits associated with mega science projects?**

Mega science projects promote **close collaboration** between researchers from disparate areas of science and technology, and across geographies. These projects work within an **organised, goal-oriented management structure**.

Mega-science does not **undermine individual research efforts**. It enriches the **overall S&T culture**.

Scientifically advanced countries work to **create ecosystems** that **connect academia, laboratories and industry** on a national scale. These ecosystems have **strong global links**.

Mega-science ventures provide **ideal learning platforms** to set up such model ecosystems on a manageable scale.

Mega-science projects also inculcate **invaluable elements of work ethic** in the scientific community. These create a **collaborative ecosystem** that remains open to growing by bringing in **wider participation**.

It also promotes culture within S&T communities to **anticipate breakthroughs and appreciate new findings** that may often deviate from the **current comfort zone for policymakers**.

### **What are steps taken in the country to promote mega science projects?**

In India, mega-science ventures were recognized and defined as a **distinct category of the scientific enterprise** during the **Planning Commission's 11th plan period (2007-2012)**.

Such ventures require **large-scale collaborative effort**. It requires **highly skilled human resources**, significant **fiscal capital and infrastructural investment** and close **academia-industry partnership**.

It was also envisaged that the needs of most mega-science projects would span across **multiple departments** of the government. So, there is a need to **encourage cooperative, coordination structures** between partnering agencies.

In this spirit, a **MoU was set up between the Department of Science & Technology (DST) and Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) to jointly fund and administer** "mega-science" projects.

India is a partner in "big science" frontier international ventures, such as **Large Hadron Collider Facility, ITER, Thirty Meter Telescope; and Square Kilometre Array**.

In India, **LIGO-India and Indian-based Neutrino Observatory (INO), Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) near Pune and Himalayan Chandra Telescope (HCT)** in Ladakh are examples of mega science projects.



### 57. [A breakthrough in EV battery tech](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**A breakthrough in EV battery tech**” published in **Business Standard** on **21<sup>st</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Science and Technology

**Relevance:** About Sodium-ion batteries

**News:** The demand for Electric Vehicle (EV) is on rise. As per **the Economic Survey 2022-23**, EV market is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 49 percent between 2022 and 2030, and annual sales are expected to reach 10 million by that time.

This will add pressure on the battery supply chain. Hence, there is a need to diversify the battery market from lithium-ion batteries to more cost-effective batteries like sodium-ion batteries.

#### **How are sodium-ion batteries better than lithium-ion batteries?**

The cheapest lithium-ion battery is **LFP (lithium-iron-phosphate)**. However, the rapid growth in the worldwide EV battery demand has caused problems with lithium mining and the prices have also increased.

In such a case, sodium-ion batteries are the alternative. **Large quantities of sodium can be extracted from both the earth’s crust and seawater** and at a lower cost than lithium.

Moreover, **an aluminium current collector can be used at both electrodes**, unlike the lithium-ion battery, which requires a more expensive copper current collector at the anode.

Overall, a **sodium-ion battery is 20-30 percent cheaper than an LFP battery**. Further, the **Sodium-ion battery has no over-discharge characteristics**, which means it can be allowed to discharge to zero volts.

This reduces the chances of fire hazards during transportation, unlike lithium batteries which must always be stored with a minimum charge.

**Sodium-ion batteries have faster charging times and could have a longer lifespan** compared to lithium-ion variants.

#### **What progress has been made for sodium-ion batteries and what are the associated challenges?**

There are many companies working on sodium-ion technology.

**For example**, the world’s largest EV battery manufacturer unveiled its first-generation sodium batteries in mid-2021 and announced a commercial launch in 2023.

However, **a major challenge in scaling up production is** the development of suitable materials and supply chain for both electrodes and the electrolyte.

**Another concern** is that it is often argued that sodium-ion batteries are heavier than the lithium-ion variants for the same energy delivered due to higher density.

However, the first generation of sodium-ion batteries has reached energy densities up to 160 Wh/kg while the most recent LFP batteries have achieved just over 180 Wh/kg.

#### **How are sodium-ion batteries relevant for India?**

A large part of the Indian market in the next decade will comprise **smaller sub-10kWh batteries that go into two- and three-wheelers**. Due to which, manufacturers have switched to LFP batteries given its low costs.

However, these batteries have higher densities making them heavier.

They can be replaced by sodium-ion batteries as **sodium-ion batteries offer a cost-effective option for applications where weight and energy density are less of an issue**.

#### **What can be the way ahead?**

Sodium-ion batteries present a promising opportunity in developing India’s home-grown battery technology, thereby reducing the dependency on oil imports.

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Moreover, the need for accelerated growth of EVs at a lower cost offers the opportunity **for India to become a global leader in manufacturing sodium-ion batteries.**

58. [HAPless In Heat – As extreme summer temperatures hit many parts of India, are govts thinking of vulnerable groups?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**HAPless In Heat – As extreme summer temperatures hit many parts of India, are govts thinking of vulnerable groups?**” published in **The Times of India** on **21st April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS-3: Disaster Management.

**Relevance:** About the impact of heatwaves.

**News:** Heatwaves have forced schools to close in parts of Meghalaya and Tripura. Indian Meteorological Department has also issued warning to nine states facing heatwaves simultaneously.

What are heat waves?

**Read here:** [Heat strokes in India: Reasons and Impacts – Explained, pointwise](#)

How can heat waves be fatal?

**Read here:** [In Maharashtra heatstroke deaths, the critical factor of humidity](#)

About heatwaves in India

Heatwaves have become India’s new normal – longer, more frequent, and deadlier. A Lancet study last year reported a 55% increase in heat-related deaths over 17 years in India. Among age group of 65 years, heat-related deaths increased from 20,000 in 2000-2004 to 31,000 in 2017-2021.

A Climate Transparency report found India lost 5.4% of its GDP to heatwaves in 2021, the highest among G20 nations. Another report found that 66% of India’s workers are exposed to heat in their open-air jobs. These workers range from airports’ outdoor staff to miners and construction workers.

What are the challenges in mitigating heat waves?

**a)** India’s Heat action plans (HAPs) had not identified vulnerable groups and were designed for dry heat without considering local humidity levels, **b)** India barely records heat-related deaths, **c)** There is scant public awareness on dealing with wet bulb conditions.

**Must read:** [Wet Bulb Temperature: Explained: India Heatwaves and the role humidity plays in making them deadly](#)

What should be done?

HAPs must be integral to city planning. India should also encourage reducing/rescheduling work hours, allowing natural shade, and creating shelters at work sites.

59. [‘Cap tiger numbers at 4k, don’t make them a pest’](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**‘Cap tiger numbers at 4k, don’t make them a pest’**” published in **The Times of India** on **21st April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About tiger population.

**News:** Recently, the government released the 5th cycle of India’s Tiger Census. Based on the survey, the tiger population in India has grown from 1,411 in 1972 to 3,167 in 2022.

What are the key findings of India’s tiger census?

**Read here:** [India is home to 75% of global tigers; count rises above 3,000](#)

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What are the government initiatives that led to an increase in the tiger population?

**Read here:** [Increasing tiger population in India and government initiatives – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the challenges India faces with the increased tiger population?

**India nearing the inherent ecological carrying capacity:** India's present reserves do not have the environmental capacity to support more than 4000 tigers. Reaching 10,000 tiger populations might create landscape transformations.

Few state governments have issued 'shoot at sight' orders to eliminate tigers.

**Note:** The standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) have dealt with various conditions including killing tigers.

**Read here:** [Burning bright – India must balance conservation efforts with the rights of forest dwellers” and Celebrate the rise in tiger population, but look beyond the numbers](#)

What are the advantages of India's tiger conservation plans?

**Reserve-specific tiger conservation plans:** India's tiger conservation plan was reserve-specific. The plan has better preventive and control measures like day-to-day monitoring, kill monitoring, deployment of Rapid Response Teams and timely compensating depredations. This deals with human-tiger conflicts.

**Help other countries:** The good practices under Project Tiger can help other tiger range countries strengthen their tiger efforts. India has already formalised its engagement with Cambodia for tiger revival, including translocation. This effort is very important for the South-East Asian region.

What should be done?

India needs sustainable tiger populations with viable tiger porosity between tiger source areas. For that, India needs **a)** A 24×7 surveillance of human-wildlife interface linked to a control room based on gainful community stewardship, **b)** Technology for preventive and control measures, **c)** A vibrant landscape approach for engaging with all stakeholders monitored by the state-level steering committee, **d)** regulation of agriculture/ cash crop cover and related actions.

[60. Heatwaves & Cool Heads – We shouldn't panic about summer extremes, because there are well-understood solutions. The trick is to implement them smartly](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Heatwaves & Cool Heads – We shouldn't panic about summer extremes, because there are well-understood solutions. The trick is to implement them smartly**” published in **The Times of India** on **22nd April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS-3: Disaster Management.

**Relevance:** About the impact of heatwaves.

**News:** Heatwaves have forced schools to close in parts of Meghalaya and Tripura. Indian Meteorological Department has also issued warning to nine states facing heatwaves simultaneously.

**What are heat waves?**

**Read here:** [Heat strokes in India: Reasons and Impacts – Explained, pointwise](#)

**How can heat waves be fatal?**

**Read here:** [In Maharashtra heatstroke deaths, the critical factor of humidity](#)

**How heat waves are increasing along with climate change?**

Heatwaves have increased every decade since the 1980s, and they now engulf most of the country. With climate change, temperature and humidity are rising together, leading to high wet-bulb temperatures.

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At 1. 5°C warming, there will be more severe heatwaves. At 2°C, “deadly” heatwaves would frequently cross 35°C wet-bulb temperatures, which is the limit of human survivability.

### What are the various Geoengineering solutions to combat climate change?

**Must Read:** [Geoengineering Technologies: Applications and Concerns – Explained, pointwise](#) and [Geo-engineering and climate control](#)

### Can Geoengineering solutions mitigate heatwave impacts?

Geoengineering solutions have enormous uncertainty and unintended consequences to manage extreme heat. For instance, Stratospheric Aerosol Injection (SAI) would not immediately cool the area or save lives. It would take months before the planet starts cooling due to sulphur spray.

**Note:** SAI involves spraying sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere to mimic the cooling effect of a volcanic eruption.

### What are the ideal solutions for heat waves?

**Reducing carbon emissions:** This is the cheapest and the best option to limit warming and deadly heat waves. Further, this can be done by deploying existing technologies – solar and wind energy, energy-efficient appliances, green buildings, electric vehicles, and reducing wasteful consumption. This will also support green growth and jobs.

**Redesign cities and buildings to adapt to heatwaves:** This entails incorporating more open spaces, green areas, and water bodies into urban landscapes. Also, buildings must be energy-efficient, with well-insulated walls and roofs and effective shading and ventilation systems to maintain a cool interior.

**Need a new heat code based on the wet-bulb temperature:** This is because many regions in India are now experiencing wet-bulb temperatures exceeding 30°C during certain parts of the year. But Indian guidelines are based on dry-bulb temperature hence, they do not capture this. Both the Global countries and India are moving in the right decarbonisation trajectory. This will aid in mitigating climate impacts with active youth participation.

### 61. [Proposed changes in gas pricing fail to adequately address the needs of the consumer](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Proposed changes in gas pricing fail to adequately address the needs of the consumer” published in “The Indian Express” on 22nd April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

**Relevance:** Issues related to the gas pricing.

**News:** The government of India has modified the October 2014 pricing mechanism for domestically produced natural gas. 8-10 per cent price reductions announced for CNG and PNG respectively by the major CGD players.

What are the issues with the energy sector in India?

India’s **per capita commercial energy consumption** has remained around a third of the global average. It is at par with **sub-Saharan levels**. India cannot achieve **geopolitical standing** in a **multi-polar world**, without addressing her **energy poverty**.

India accounts for just under **6% of global commercial energy consumption**. It consumes under 23% of the commercial energy consumed by China in both absolute and per capita terms. India’s share of **global gas consumption** is just 1.5%. Gas accounts for only 6.3% of India’s **commercial energy basket**.

What are the issues with the revised gas pricing mechanism for domestically produced gas?

**Deny benefits to Indian consumers:** The revision comes at a time when Natural Gas and LNG prices have fallen by 70%. The current **Henry Hub price** for natural gas is just above 2\$/MMBTU (million British Thermal Units). There is a **surplus of Russian natural gas**.

**Spot LNG** is trading well below \$13/MMBTU. The proposed changes deny Indian consumers the benefit of these falling prices.

**No reason for differential treatment of KG Basin:** The changes proposed do not impact the **pricing of gas from the KG Basin fields**. For the KG Basin fields, the price is capped at the **full**

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**energy equivalent of alternate imported fuels.** The logic behind this **differential treatment** and the **magnitude of the difference** imposed remains unclear.

**Not universally applicable:** The floor price of \$4/MMBTU and the ceiling price of \$6.5/MMBTU for domestic natural gas is applicable only to the gas produced from the nominated fields of ONGC/OIL. It is not applicable to all-natural gas fields covered by government-administered prices.

Again, the **basis for choosing** the floor of \$4 and the ceiling of \$6.5 and **applying it selectively** to only certain public sector natural gas fields remains unclear.

**Other issues:** The nominated fields of ONGC/OIL that are subject to a floor price and a ceiling price will be eligible for an **arbitrary 20% premium** for natural gas produced from “new wells”. The reasoning for these **arbitrary provisions**, applied selectively to certain fields, also remains unclear.

What will be the impacts of the new gas pricing mechanism?

The **different formulations** for pricing the same commodity are further complicated by the proposed new and unprecedented variations. This is prone to gaming and creates a non-level playing field.

The high well-head prices in India for domestic natural gas ensure a continued high price for LNG exports to India.

**Note:** *The well-head price is the price without transportation costs charged by the producer for petroleum or natural gas.*

### [62. Quantum Jump: GoI does well to fund R&D in computing's next revolution](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Quantum Jump: GoI does well to fund R&D in computing's next revolution**” published in **The Times of India** on **22nd April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Science and Technology – Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

**Relevance:** About National Quantum Mission.

**News:** The government's recent announcement for National Quantum Mission (NQM) for 2023-24 through 2030-31 is a fillip to R&D in quantum tech.

#### **About National Quantum Mission**

**Read here:** [Cabinet approves National Quantum Mission to scale-up scientific & industrial R&D for quantum technologies](#)

#### **What is quantum computing, and what are its applications?**

**Must read:** [Quantum computing technology and associated applications – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **What is the significance of quantum entanglement?**

The ground-breaking research of the 1970s and 1980s into the phenomenon of quantum entanglement was recognised with a Physics Nobel only in 2022. Their research has shown that entangled particles (physically apart yet linked) can ferry information over massive distances. This is the heart of quantum science.

#### **What are the challenges in developing quantum computing technologies?**

**Lack of technology:** India only has a basic quantum computer Qsim that allows researchers to simulate quantum computation.

**Lack of skills:** In 2021, for 290 quantum tech masters' grads globally, there were 851 jobs. Barely 16% of the world's universities offer degrees in the field.

### What should be done?

India's public-funded research institutes must collaborate with startups and firms to develop the initial intermediate-sized supercomputers.

### 63. Is the supremacy of the U.S. dollar under threat?

**Source**– The post is based on the article “Is the supremacy of the U.S. dollar under threat?” published in “The Hindu” on 24th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Economy

**Relevance:** External economy

**News**- The topic of dedollarisation seems to be in discourse. Dedollarisation refers to the deposing of the U.S. dollar from the reserve currency status it enjoys globally.

#### **What are the arguments given in support of dedollarisation?**

The U.S. dollar has depreciated against most major currencies. It has **declined by more than 10%** in the past six months against the euro. Also, the **price of gold** has increased in the past six months despite the fact that the Federal Reserve raised interest rates relentlessly.

Russia and China are **buying large amounts of gold**. It has been cited as the reason for the increase in its price. The **sanctions levied by the U.S. and its allies** against Russia are responsible for it.

Countries would prefer to distance themselves from a currency **weaponized** by the government to serve a **geopolitical agenda**.

#### **What are the arguments against dedollarisation?**

The dollar depreciation against the euro and other currencies was preceded by a **significant appreciation** in the dollar during recent interest rate increases.

The Federal Reserve considered a pause after the **collapse of the Silicon Valley Bank**. The depreciation in the dollar can be linked to the **temporary financial instability** and the slowing down of interest rate hikes.

The sanctions levied by the U.S. against Russia are **not unprecedented**. The U.S. has a **history of imposing sanctions** on countries. Therefore, it is not logical to assume that the current sanctions against Russia would cause dedollarisation.

#### **Why does the dollar still enjoy the status of reserve currency?**

**Chinese policies**– The argument of the dollar being dumped in favour of the Chinese yuan is cited due to rise in Chinese lending and China's **dominant export sector**. Countries borrowing from China are beholden to them. Example is Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, China does not allow the yuan to **float freely** against other currencies. It is said to engage in **exchange-rate manipulation** by routinely devaluing its currency.

China has **controlled capital flows** and does not allow its citizens and firms to leave the country freely. Chinese authorities banned Bitcoin because citizens dumped the yuan in favour of the cryptocurrency.

China's **export dominance** stems from its significant **labour capital**. However, China's population growth is declining. Thus, China does not currently pose a strong challenge to the U.S. **dollar's dominance**.

**Openness of the US economy**– The United States enjoys **unparalleled investor confidence** because it is seen as an open **society and democracy**.

The open market is an **attractive haven for investors** across the world who prefer **liquidity, minimal capital control and minimal political influence**.

A real contender for world reserve currency would have to be an **open society comprising democratic values**.

An autocratic government with **strict capital controls, opaque foreign exchange policies and restrictions on conducting business** cannot overthrow the U.S. dollar.

### 64. [India has a crucial role in setting international statistical standards](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “India has a crucial role in setting international statistical standards” published in the “Live mint” on 24th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Important international institutions

**News-** Recently, India was elected to the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) after a gap of two decades. The membership is for a term of four years, beginning from January 2024.

#### **What are some facts about the United Nations Statistical Commission?**

The UNSC was **established in 1947**. It is the **highest body** of the **global statistical system**. It brings together the chief statisticians of member states from around the world.

It is the **highest decision making body** for **international statistical activities**. It is responsible for setting **statistical standards** and the development of concepts and methods. It also includes their implementation at the national and international level.

They also enable **comparability across countries** through various indicators such as Gross Domestic Product, Gross Value Addition, employment-unemployment statistics, price statistics, health accounts, tourism accounts, environment accounts.

#### **What are the contributions of India to the United Nations Statistical Commission?**

Two prominent statisticians from India have chaired the Commission. The first Indian to hold its chair was **P.C. Mahalanobis**. He was **followed by V.R Rao** who chaired the 19th session in 1976.

Mahalanobis made **path-breaking contributions** to the UNSC during its formative years. He created a **sub-commission on statistical sampling**. It paved the way for the **application of sample surveys** in various fields of official statistics.

Rao **strengthened the statistical organisations** of many developing countries, especially for carrying out household sample surveys. He chaired the only session of the UNSC **held outside a UN duty station** at New Delhi in 1976.

#### **Which issues related to the accounting system need the consideration of the United Nations Statistical Commission?**

One of the most important items on the agenda will be the **finalization and implementation of the System of National Accounts (SNA) 2025**.

SNA refers to the **framework** adopted by UN member countries for the **formulation of national accounts**. It is the **basis for estimation of GDP, GVA and other macroeconomic aggregates**.

The current estimates of National Income are based on **SNA 2008, with 2011-12 as base year**. Emerging economies like India are in a disadvantageous position because of **non-measurement** of certain economic activities, like **unpaid work by women**.

The **women's labour participation rate** in India is just about 20%, compared to about 70% in the US, UK and other developed countries.

A majority of women are engaged in economic activities, such as family labour in agriculture. This **remains unaccounted for**.

With the **internet and rapid digitalization**, the **basic structure of production, consumption and expenditure** has changed since the SNA 2008. This has changed the **production, consumption and expenditure patterns**.

Digitalization has resulted in a shift from **physical to online transactions**. It has given rise to **new types of economic activities** that are beyond the old SNA framework.

**Digital intermediary platforms** have emerged. The **Gig economy** has independent service providers who source their work from these platforms, such as bicycle couriers, and cab drivers. Currently, their **value addition** remains outside the system's accounting ambit.

Similarly, there are a few products and services which are **beyond SNA 2008**, like data and digital services provided by enterprises.

There are other important issues relating to the **measurement of our well-being** and the **impact of climate change**. There is a need to incorporate these economic activities into the revised SNA of 2025.

### 65. [Quantum leap – New mission can lead to benefits across sectors](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Quantum leap – New mission can lead to benefits across sectors**” published in the **Business Standard** on **24th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Science and Technology – Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

**Relevance:** About National Quantum Mission.

**News:** The government’s recent announcement for National Quantum Mission (NQM) for 2023-24 through 2030-31 is a fillip to R&D in quantum tech.

#### **About National Quantum Mission**

**Read here:** [Cabinet approves National Quantum Mission to scale-up scientific & industrial R&D for quantum technologies](#)

#### **What is quantum computing, and what are its applications?**

Its various applications include,

- In theory, a quantum computer could deliver accurate meteorological projections, perform seismic data analysis, analyse protein folding, etc.
- Quantum computers could potentially break most current encryption, by quickly solving the mathematical problems on which modern cryptography is based.
- Quantum technology can lead to benefits across fields as diverse as communications, health, financial sector, energy management, drug design, as well as aerospace and military applications.

**Must read:** [Quantum computing technology and associated applications – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **What is the significance of quantum entanglement?**

**Read here:** [Quantum Jump: GoI does well to fund R&D in computing’s next revolution](#)

#### **What are the various characteristics of Quantum computers?**

- Quantum computing uses quantum bits, or qubits. A conventional bit is based on an electrical current being switched on or off, which enables binary calculations. A qubit can be both on and off at the same time. This allows a quantum computer to perform far more calculations with far fewer qubits.
- Special materials and rare helium isotopes are used to manage cooling and shielding, quite apart from specialised semiconductors allowing for quantum logic gates.
- Quantum applications in the related fields of communications and cryptography depend on another quantum property — “Quantum entanglement”.
- Cryptographically secure communications can be generated by separating two entangled particles. Moreover, by sharing entangled particles as keys, communications become unbreakable.

#### **What are the concerns associated with quantum computing?**

**a)** Quantum computers are prone to far higher levels of error, **b)** Superpositions (where a qubit is both on and off) can collapse quickly, **c)** The software programming is different, and requires excellent error control and management, **d)** Researchers have found it hard to maintain physically stable configurations, **e)** Quantum computers require huge installations which must be housed in super-cold, seismically stable places since even passing trucks can cause errors through imperceptible tremors and **f)** Developing quantum technologies need extensive research into the design and synthesis of superconductors, novel semiconductor structures, and materials with complex topological structures as well as new software.



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### 66. Why urea rules India's farms

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Why urea rules India's farms” published in **The Indian Express** on **25<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Agriculture inputs

**Relevance:** concerns associated with the use of urea.

**News:** The efforts of the government such as launching **Nano Urea and coating all indigenously manufactured and imported urea with neem oil** have not been successful in reducing the urea consumption.

**What do the current statistics say about the use of urea?**

**Sales of urea crossed a record 35.7 million tons (mt) in the fiscal year 2022-23.**

After neem-coating was fully enforced from December 2015, consumption of the urea dipped in the initial two years. However, the trend reversed from 2018-19.

**Urea sales in 2022-23 were about 5.1 mt higher than in 2015-16 and over 9 mt than in 2009-10.**

All other fertilisers, except single super phosphate (SSP), have registered much lower increases or even declines.

**What is nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) and why hasn't it been successful?**

**Read Here:** [About NBS](#)

The data reveals worsening of nutrient imbalance, with **urea consumption rising by over a third since 2009-10.**

This has been **due to a slower rise in the prices of urea.** The price increased only by 16.5%, after the introduction of NBS.

The current government has also **brought back price controls on DAP.** Companies are not allowed to charge more than Rs 27,000 per tonne.

These reasons have led to an increase in the sales of fertilisers in the fiscal year 2022-23.

**What are the harms of using excess fertilizers?**

Fertilisers are essentially food for crops. They, like humans, need nutrients for growth and grain yield.

Initially, **the crop yield on the use of fertilisers was good**, especially during the Green Revolution. However, with the time, **crop yield response to fertiliser use has more than halved.**

**For example**, 1 kg of NPK nutrients yielded 12.1 kg of cereal grains in India during the 1960s, but only 5 kg during the 2010s.

Further, as per recent research, the Nitrogen Use Efficiency (**NUE**) in India has fallen from 48.2% in 1962-63 to 34.7% in 2018. The 34.7% NUE was below the global average of 45.3% and 53.3% for North America in 2018.

**Note:** *NUE refers to the proportion of N applied mainly through urea that is actually utilised by crops to produce harvested yields.*

**What can be the way ahead?**

**First**, the consumption of urea can be reduced **by increasing its prices.** However, it is not easy due to political reasons.

**Second**, instead of increasing prices, efforts may be put **towards improving NUE.** This will enable farmers to harvest the same or more grain yields with fewer bags.

**Nano Urea** is also primarily aimed at boosting NUE. **For instance**, a single 500-ml Nano Urea bottle containing just 4% N can effectively replace at least one 45-kg bag of regular 46% N urea.

**Third**, the government should also make **incorporation of urease and nitrification inhibitors compulsory in urea.**

These are chemical compounds that inhibit the activity of **urease** (a soil enzyme that breaks down urea into ammonium and further to ammonia) and **nitrifying bacteria** (that convert ammonium to nitrate), making more N available to the crops.

**Source:** **The Indian Express**

67. [Why Dollar's Losing Its Shine](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Why Dollar's Losing Its Shine” published in **The Times of India** on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Economy – Money and Banking

**Relevance:** measures taken adopt alternatives to dollar dominance

**News:** Countries around the world are looking for an alternative to the weakening US dollar.

**What are the alternatives being adopted?**

Central banks of most countries are now **buying gold as an alternative to dollars**. As per the estimate, gold currently accounts for a record 33% of monthly global demand.

This buying boom has helped push the price of gold to near record levels, more than 50% higher than what predicted by models based on real interest rates.

Moreover, **countries like Russia, China, Brazil and India** are also looking for a new currency to challenge the dollar. Their goal is to trade with one another directly, in their own coin.

**Why are these countries looking for alternatives to dollars for trading?**

**Global trade has been based on the dollar since the end of World War II.** However, the US has used its dollar dominance against countries to put financial sanctions.

As per the report, **30% of all countries now face sanctions from the US, the EU, Japan and the UK**, which has gone up from 10% in the early 1990s.

The recent one is sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. This cuts off Russian banks from the dollar-based global payment system.

**This implied that in future any developing nation could be a target.**

**What are other measures being taken to promote non-dollar-based trading?**

**The Philippines and Thailand** are now looking to non-dollar-based trading. **India has also been discussing with the UAE** the idea of conducting non-oil trade in rupees.

Further, **dollar as forex reserves has also seen decline since the launch of Russia sanctions**. As per the report, **the dollar share of central bank reserves is down to 47% from 73% two decades ago**.

Further, there are many central banks that are looking to launch their own **digital currency**. The number has tripled since 2020, representing 95% of the world's gross domestic product.

**Many are testing these digital currencies for use in bilateral trade** which again is a challenge to dollars.

**What does this imply for the US?**

The shift from the dollar to other forms of currencies in trade increases risk for America.

This is because a dominant dollar matters for the US economy as **high demand for the currency tends to lower the cost of borrowing abroad**, which is a privilege for America.

Moreover, among the top 20 developed economies, **America now has the second highest fiscal and current account deficits**. Further, **the country's ability to pay its debts is also slipping**, as its reliance on foreign funding keeps growing.

Hence, **the shift from the dollar towards other currencies will affect overall America's economy**.

68. [Next step for the infotech boom](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Next step for the infotech boom” published in the “Business Standard” on 25th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy

**News-** The article explains the growth of infotech industry in India

**What are major reflections from the present status of the infotech industry in India?**

The **long-term vision of science and technology development** in the Nehru era of planning created a capacity to keep track of technology developments.

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The **rapid expansion of engineering education** became the basis for **India's global comparative advantage** in medium-skill service supply.

### **What was the policy focus of the government in the 70s and its impacts?**

The policy focus in the 1970s shifted on public sector companies to **manufacture hardware for defence, space and atomic energy**, as a part of the **self-sufficiency strategy**.

The public enterprises developed the skills required for **specific needs**, mainly for **governmental applications**. It had a limited impact on the economy. The high tariffs on hardware imports constrained the development of the service industry.

### **How did the policy focus of the government after 80s change the status of the infotech industry in India?**

The change made in the mid-1980s in the infotech service industry has an **economy-wide impact**. The new policies announced by the Rajiv Gandhi-led government in 1984.

The tariffs on hardware imports were **substantially reduced** and **software technology parks** were established. They provided **satellite links** to major IT developers, and enabled them to **directly transmit** the work done in India abroad.

### **What are the other factors responsible for growth of the infotech industry in India?**

The big change occurred towards the end of the last century. Computer programmes designed with **two-digit year numbers** had to be modified in a time-consuming process to take **four digit year numbers**.

The Indian software service companies could do this at low cost because of their **low worker wages levels**.

Software exports from India **increased nearly 2.5 times** in dollar terms **between 1998–1999 and 2000–2001**

Another change that generated new options for the Indian software service firms was the **establishment of the euro currency**. It required similar tedious changes in computer programs. Since then, the India software service industry has become **a key global player** in the trade in software services and internet technology-enabled services. Its **annual exports** have grown from around **\$3 billion in FY2000 to \$181 billion in FY2022**.

### **What is the way forward for future growth of the infotech industry in India?**

A greater presence on the **frontiers of infotech development** and **better integration into the needs of the national economy** will decide the future of IT industry

The industry is a **major global player** but not yet a **major innovator**. The **R&D spending** of the major companies is about 1% of turnover. It is way below the levels for **global internet players** not just in the developed world but also in China.

With **artificial intelligence (AI)**, India's **cost advantage in low-cost services** will be eroded unless it itself becomes a major player in AI and other new technology developments.

This will require substantially **greater investment in R&D** by both the government as well as infotech companies.

There are other areas that are becoming more important, like **cloud computing**. Most users in India are dependent on foreign suppliers of cloud services.

It is also necessary that the infotech service industry increases its **focus on domestic sales**, which at present are just a **little above 20% of their turnover**.

The potential and the need for domestic sales will increase with the development of an **open access digital framework** by the government, with assistance and cooperation with private sector software pioneers

This **digital public network** includes Aadhaar, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and new developments like the **Open Credit Enablement Network (OCEN)** and the **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)**.

Access to digital frameworks has shot up with the growing number of **smartphone and internet users** and **bank deposit holders**.

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The infotech service companies must now see themselves as a **major domestic supplier of services** and not just as **globally competitive exporters**.

### 69. Batting for borrowers – Penal levy on loan defaulters should not be usurious

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Batting for borrowers – Penal levy on loan defaulters should not be usurious**” published in **The Hindu** on **25th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

**Relevance:** About penal levy on loan defaulters.

**News:** The Reserve Bank of India recently released the draft guidelines on ‘Fair Lending Practice’ as there is an increase in retail lending in recent years. The draft circular regulates penal charges on loan defaulters.

#### **What is the rationale behind regulating penal levy on loan defaulters?**

The industry’s share of outstanding bank credit had shrunk to about 24% as of February 2023, from over 43% in 2014-15. The personal loans had surged to 30%, from just 19% eight years ago,

There are times when lenders have levied a penal interest over and above the contracted rate of interest when borrowers delay repayment or default. This is done despite the RBI allows the credit provider to reprice the loan in case a borrower’s ‘credit risk profile’ has changed.

Earlier, the penal levy was focused on solely fostering credit discipline among borrowers. But in practice, the penal interest turned into a revenue enhancement tool.

Such as **a)** Some entities were charging ‘excessive’ rates of penal interest, **b)** Lenders had been capitalising the penal interest, thereby increasing the principal amount that the borrower would ultimately have to repay.

Thereby, lenders seek an unduly profit from borrowers’ defaults. So, the RBI has issued a draft circular for regulating penal charges on loan accounts.

#### **How did the RBI’s Fair Lending Practice aim to reduce the penal levy on loan defaulters?**

-The penal charges should be recovered separately and must not be added either to the principal outstanding or the rate of interest charged on the loan.

-Lenders can follow the normal process for compounding the outstanding primary interest.

-Lenders have the freedom to set the quantum of penal charges proportional to the default or non-compliance with the terms of the loan contract beyond a preset threshold.

-The penal charges levied on individual borrowers cannot be at a rate higher than a similar charge applicable to corporate borrowers.

-The penal charges must be communicated upfront when finalising every loan and unfailingly reiterated to the borrower in every subsequent reminder for loan repayments.

Overall, the move will benefit small borrowers, individual borrowers, and others.

### 70. The government shouldn’t be running a fact-check unit

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The government shouldn’t be running a fact-check unit**” published in the **Livemint** on **25th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3: role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

**Relevance:** About amendments to IT Rules.

**News:** Recently, the government of India has notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023.

#### **What are the salient provisions of the IT amendment rules?**

**Read here:** [IT Ministry notifies body to flag ‘fake’ content about govt](#)

#### **What are the concerns associated with amendments to IT Rules?**

**State’s rejection of ground reality:** A private survey has shown that the health department’s management information system (MIS) missed more than 75% of infant deaths in Maharashtra.

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This survey led to the formation of the Abhay Bang committee which proposed recommendations for proper measuring. Later, Maharashtra became the first state to launch a child nutrition mission in 2005. The State's model of using community health workers to monitor and treat newborns was eventually scaled up across rural India.

If Maharashtra had a state-run fact-check unit, then the government will dismiss the private report as false. This will **diminish the progress of society**.

**Restrict public access to data:** Since only government officials have access to certain kinds of government data, the government data might be inaccessible to the public. For instance, analysts prefer to use the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data rather than Employees Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) data. This is because the anonymized respondent-level PLFS data is publicly available, unlike the EPFO database.

**Read more:** [Express View on IT Rules amendments: Government sets itself up as judge, jury and executioner](#)

**What are the advantages of amendment to IT Rules?**

**Read here:** [Amendment to IT Rules and regulating fake news – Explained, pointwise](#)

At a time when India is trying to emerge as a viable and democratic alternative to China, India need to reconsider the amendments.

### [71. On the Code on Social Security for platform-based gig workers](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article **“On the Code on Social Security for platform-based gig workers”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **26th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Employment

**Relevance:** Issues related to gig economy workers

**News-** The Ashok Gehlot led Rajasthan government has recently announced the Rajasthan Platform-based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, 2023.

**What are legal issues related to gig-economy workers?**

**Definition of employee-** The three new labour codes passed by Parliament recently acknowledge platform and gig workers as **new occupational categories**. But the current laws do not see them as **future industrial workers**.

Working **in factories, the duration of time needed on a factory floor, and associated issues** are recognized as the parameters for defining an ideal worker under most labour laws. This has not shifted much.

The Code on Wages, 2019, tries to expand this idea by using ‘wages’ as the **primary definition of ‘employee’**. **Wage relationships** are an important part of the informal economy.

**Legal guarantees-**Platform delivery people can **claim benefits, but not labour rights**. This distinction makes them beneficiaries of State programs. This does not allow them to go to court to demand **better and stable pay, or better regulations**

This also means that the government or courts cannot pull up platform companies for their **choice of pay, or duration of work**.

In the **Code on Social Security, 2020**, platform workers are now eligible for benefits like **maternity benefits, life and disability cover, old age protection, provident fund, employment injury benefits**.

However, eligibility does not mean that the benefits are guaranteed. None of these are **secure benefits**. These benefits will depend on the **political will** at the Central and State government levels and how unions elicit **political support**.

72. [Welcome to the brain economy: Technology will change the way we look at labour, capital and skills](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Welcome to the brain economy: Technology will change the way we look at labour, capital and skills” published in “The Indian Express” on 26th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Employment

**Relevance-** Changing nature of employment

**News-** The article explains the emergence of brain economy and its impact.

**How has the nature of labour changed?**

The nature of labour has changed drastically since the mid-19th century — **from body to skill to brain.**

Physical labour required no education, skill-based labour required higher education, training and expertise. Brain-based labour is about **rapid innovation and creation, driven by technology.**

No industry will be **immune from technology** in the global brain economy. Retail, agriculture, automobile, finance, energy, manufacturing, healthcare, education, sports and entertainment will be driven and reshaped by technology and brain power.

Technology will not be limited to software, artificial intelligence and data analytics. It will spread rapidly across brain sciences, quantum computing, genetic engineering, 3D printing, nanotechnology and combinations.

The search for **perfection in technology** and its related issues is an illusion. Technology will keep evolving and the **new generation of technology** will solve the problems of earlier generations. First generation vaccines saved billions of lives from Covid.

**What is the way forward for the success of the brain economy?**

There is a need to abandon **outdated stereotypes** of **evil corporations, sinful profits and inhuman technology.**

The **myth of man vs machine** needs to be ended. Technology doesn't destroy jobs. It **creates jobs, liberates people and drives social progress.**

Advances in technology in the brain economy will always be a couple of steps ahead of politicians, bureaucrats, policies and laws. We will have to learn to deal with it.

There will be issues of concern like **market dominance** by corporations and **exploitation of legal loopholes.** There will be **ethical dilemmas** regarding technological choices. **Regulation and oversight** are essential. But these need to be **pragmatic, not dogmatic.**

There is a need to widen the definitions of **progressive, intellectual and civil society.** These definitions can't remain confined to a closed group of liberal arts professors, activists and NGOs.

**Technology illiteracy** impedes understanding, perpetrates falsehoods and obstructs progress. A clear understanding of technology is an important issue.

Scientists, technologists, businessmen, entrepreneurs and corporations must also be present at the **discussion table.** **Collaboration** is the key.

The **education architecture** of the country needs to be revamped. Students and teachers in primary and secondary education need to be equipped with technology. **Failures in experimentation and creation in schools** should be celebrated.

**Multidisciplinary research universities** should be created on a war footing. Courses in **different aspects of technology** must be made mandatory for all liberal arts programmes, just like liberal arts courses should be made mandatory in all science and technology departments.

**What will be the nature of the brain economy?**

The concerns of the employees in the body economy revolved around **low wages, job tenure and exploitation.** The concerns of the employees in the skill economy are **skill relevance, flexibility and work-life balance.**

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In the brain economy, they will question the company's impact on the **environment, gender parity, wealth sharing and other social issues**.

There could be many failures. Every successful innovation is built on a **graveyard of failures**. We will have to get used to it.

Many corporations will be a **combination of brain, skill and body**. Amazon, for example, has brains that create new offerings, skills that maintain their vast data centres and bodies that deliver packages to homes.

The focus will be on the **complete elimination of the body** and the **gradual replacement of skills** through technology. The accompanying job losses will have to be offset by the creation of new types of jobs.

Many brains will operate outside the **ambit of corporations**. The scale and scope of **open-source innovation** will continue to expand. It will give rise to a **"societal brain"**. India's digital public goods revolution is an example of this.

The **relationship between capital and labour** will change. Capital exploited physical labour and invested in skills. It will now partner with the brains.

The **balance of power between capital and labour** will become more symmetric. But markets will create inequality by assigning exponentially differential values to body, skill and brain.

### 73. Get real with targets – on foreign trade policy

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Get real with targets"** published in **Business Standard** on **26<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Economy – Industrial Policy**

**Relevance:** **concerns associated with** the foreign trade policy 2023.

**News:** The government announced a new foreign trade policy last month.

#### **What are the concerns with the new foreign trade policy?**

The new policy has set a target of achieving **exports of goods and services worth \$2 trillion** by 2030.

Therefore, in order to meet the target of \$2 trillion by 2030, a compound annual growth rate (**CAGR**) should be 14.61 percent during this seven-year period.

This means the share of goods and services exports in India's gross domestic product (**GDP**) should increase from 23 percent in 2022-23 to over 28 percent in 2029-30.

However, **the CAGR for exports of goods and services in the last 10 years was a little less than 6 percent**. Therefore, in such a scenario, these aspirational targets look challenging.

**Must Read:** [India's New Foreign Trade Policy \(FTP\) and its significance – Explained](#)

#### **What are the drawbacks of establishing such an export target?**

**Unachievable Targets:** The foreign trade policy in 2015 had set a target of 11.6 percent CAGR from \$466 billion (merchandise goods and services) in 2013-14 to \$900 billion 2019- 20.

However, **the actual performance during the period** of the 2015 policy was a disaster, with exports between 2014-15 and 2019-20 showing a CAGR of just 2 percent.

Therefore, the government has not learned from experience and has again set the export target in the new foreign policy.

**Overtaking Roles:** It has been argued that the government should not get involved in setting export targets because exports are done by companies not by the government.

Instead, **the government's job should be to create a conducive environment for higher exports through a supportive policy**.

**Lack of Accountability:** The government set fiscal deficit target and it is held accountable for that because a fiscal deficit target is all about how the government goes about raising its revenues and spending on various schemes.

Whereas **exports have to be achieved by exporters** and hence the job of meeting a target should be seen as a success or failure on the part of the exporting community.

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Hence, **these kinds of targets free the government from being held accountable.**

**For instance**, nobody was held accountable for the failure of the foreign trade policy of 2015 in meeting the exports target of \$900 billion to be achieved by 2019-20.

**What can be the way ahead?**

**First**, the government should not worry about setting targets for exports and instead, it should **focus on ways domestic policies are framed to make exports more competitive.**

Additionally, **attention should be paid to how exchange rate regulations** may benefit exporters by bringing them closer to the real effective exchange rate and **how import tariffs can be reduced** effectively to lower exporters' costs.

**Second**, if the government wants to set a target, it should not be for a period of five or seven years. **The target should be annual**, which could be monitored at the end of the year, and based on the performance, the goals could be revisited.

### 74. Turning the clock back – on Liberalised Remittance Scheme

**Source:** This post is created based on the article **“Turning the clock back”** published in **Business Standard** on **26<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 3- Indian Economy, Liberalisation

**Context:** In the recent times, government has tightened the restrictions on how Indians can remit money overseas.

Post-1991 reforms, Liberalised Remittance Scheme, or LRS was introduced. It permitted individuals to send \$250,000 out of the country, in a calendar year.

The limit was reduced to \$75,000 in 2013 as a macro-prudential measure. However, this limit was gradually restored to earlier \$250,000.

This policy depicted confidence in the Indian economy's strength, rupee's float and the sustainability of the country's external account.

However, in recent years, this policy has been reversed. The government has systematically tightened the restrictions on how individuals can remit money out of the country.

**What are the changes introduced linked to the outward remittances?**

**First**, the finance bill of the last session of the parliament has increased the TDS on remittances to 20% from the earlier 5%.

**Second**, Purchases done through the credit card abroad are also being sought to be brought into the regulatory net by the government.

**Third**, Furthermore, Reserve Bank of India has set a 180-day limit on any funds sent outside the country. Within this period, the funds either should be invested in any instrument or repatriated.

The funds in the foreign deposit accounts will not be considered an investment.

**What are the implications of tightening of outward remittances?**

Due to repatriation of the money, it will cycle back in the economy. It will lead to an increased transaction cost.

Globally, restrictions on remittances are seen as a sign of insecurity among policymakers about the direction of the economy.

It reduces the freedoms to Indian investors, where and how they like to invest.

High levels of restrictions for such transfers will increase the incentive for evasion or the return of illegal and opaque systems.



### [75. Laws should keep pace with fast evolving technologies](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Laws should keep pace with fast evolving technologies**” published in **Live Mint** on **26<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 3 – Awareness in the fields of IT

**Context:** Recent developments in the field of AI are conflicting with Europe’s GDPR.

Recently, discussions on regulating artificial intelligence (AI) have raised concerns about privacy. Many experts believe that AI technologies, like Large Language Models (LLMs), may not meet the strict privacy requirements of Europe’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Since GDPR is considered a global standard, this could impact AI technology deployment worldwide.

#### **What are the conflicts between GDPR and Large Language Models?**

GDPR emphasizes obtaining individual consent before collecting and processing personal data. LLMs, however, training data is gathered from the web, which potentially includes personal information without consent. GDPR allows data collection without consent if there is a “legitimate interest,” but it is difficult to argue that LLMs are a “necessity” in this context.

Moreover, GDPR principles of data minimization and retention restriction allows collection of that much personal data which is required to achieve a specific purpose. The collected data should be removed after that. This principal conflicts with LLMs’ reliance on vast and indefinite data availability for continuous model refinement. only so.

Lastly, users could also share their personal info with Conversational AI solutions. It becomes a part of the learning cycle and becomes part of the AI model. It also risks gathering personally identifiable information, potentially violating GDPR.

#### **What should be the course of action?**

Recently, many European country regulators are investigating the matter of privacy involved in the OpenAI’s use.

However, considering these issues, some suggest re-examining our present legal frameworks to better align with new technologies like LLMs and generative AI.

As past technological advancements have also prompted legal changes, it is crucial to strike a balance between innovation and privacy without forcing new technologies to comply with outdated frameworks.

### [76. The right to litigate – Use of legal remedies to limit nature’s exploitation is at the core of democracy](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The right to litigate – Use of legal remedies to limit nature’s exploitation is at the core of democracy**” published in **The Hindu** on **26th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About coal-fired plants.

**News:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has recently registered a case against an environmental lawyer and his organisation for violating Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) provisions. The CBI has said that they are using foreign funds to encourage litigation that will stall existing and prospective coal-fired plants in India.

#### **About India’s climate ambitions**

As a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and various key agreements, India has undertaken initiatives to gradually reduce reliance on fossil fuel sources and become ‘net zero’ by 2070.

India has consistently endorsed reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that mentions the urgency of ensuring global temperatures do not exceed 1.5°C of pre-industrial times. Thereby necessitating that global net anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions decline by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030.

### Can India continue to operate coal-fired plants?

Under the principles of 'Common and Differentiated Responsibility', India has maintained its right to rely on coal plants in the interim as it is still a developing economy.

The actual cost of renewable sources (solar, wind and nuclear) remains much more than that of fossil-fuel power.

**Read more:** [Phasing Out Coal in India – Explained, Pointwise](#)

### About India's upcoming coal-fired plants and challenges in execution

India has 28.5 GW of coal power capacity planned and 32 GW of plants are under construction. But a majority of their commissioning has been delayed due to

**-Insufficient environment clearances, land acquisition, and redevelopment and rehabilitation-related problems.**

**-Rulings by the National Green Tribunal and lack of adherence to norms prescribed** mainly under provisions of the Environment Protection and related legislation.

**-Funding for new coal plants is increasingly difficult** with multilateral funding agencies refusing to fund such plants.

**Read more:** [Coal crisis in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

### Is using legal remedies to limit the operation of coal-fired plants wrong?

No. In India, many coal plants run inefficiently and rely on lenient environmental curbs as they are critical to India's power needs. In this situation, using legal remedies to limit the industrial exploitation of nature and ensuring just compensation is at the core of a civilised democracy.

### 77. Plastic ban failure – Managing plastic waste needs a multi-pronged strategy

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Plastic ban failure – Managing plastic waste needs a multi-pronged strategy**” published in **The Hindu** on **26th April 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About Plastic ban failure.

**News:** Even nearly 10 months after the ban on single-use plastic products, their use is still rampant in most parts of the country. This shows the plastic ban failure.

**Must read:** [Ban on Single-Use Plastic – Explained, pointwise](#)

### What is the present status of the plastic ban?

Some of the bulk consumers of single-use plastic materials have switched to their biodegradable alternatives. However, most other producers, sellers, and consumers use and throw plastic, particularly thin carry bags, stuff as usual. For instance, **a)** A recent **anti-plastic drive carried out in Kerala** led to the confiscation of 25 tonnes of proscribed plastic material, **b)** Delhi's 100-day “beat plastic campaign”, which culminated on Earth Day on April 22, has resulted in the seizure of over 14,000 kg of outlawed plastic items, **c)** Delhi is now the largest producer of plastic waste among all the metropolitan cities in the country.

There has been hardly any noticeable improvement in the system of collection and safe disposal of discarded plastic materials. Thereby, aggravating the menace of plastic pollution.

**Read more:** [Ineffective implementation: Ban on single-use plastic is not working](#)

### What is the reason behind the Plastic ban failure?

**a)** The implementation of the rules was left to the states and their pollution control boards. But they have not discharged their functions responsibly, **b)** The Centre which displayed remarkable determination at the time of promulgating the ban, failed to take up follow-up action, **c)** The Centre has not taken the states along for putting in place an effective legal framework for plastic waste management, **d)** Many state's plastic waste management norms remain only on paper. For instance, Delhi framed the Plastic Waste Management Rules way back in 2019, still, these rules are not yet notified, **e)** Inadequate availability of their cost-effective alternatives, and **f)** Less investment on research and

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development for suitable substitutes for use-and-throw plastic goods. Similarly, the government also has not offered any fiscal or other incentives for this purpose.

**Read more:** [Why a ban on single-use plastics won't help](#)

### **What should be done to ensure a proper ban on single-use plastic?**

The government needed a well-advised multi-pronged strategy to address plastic pollution in its entirety. This should focus right from production to retrieval and appropriate recycling or disposal of the plastics.

### 78. [Maharashtra heatstroke deaths: Protecting the vulnerable this summer](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Maharashtra heatstroke deaths: Protecting the vulnerable this summer**” published in the **Indian Express** on **27th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS-3: Disaster Management.

**Relevance:** About the impact of heatstrokes.

**News:** Recently, fourteen people died from heatstroke while attending a government award function in an open space in Navi Mumbai. The IMD has predicted a hotter summer this year. So, India has to take steps to prevent many deaths from heat strokes this year.

### **What are heatstrokes, and what are their implications?**

**Note:** In 2010, heat waves in Ahmedabad took more than 800 deaths. In response, Ahmedabad became the first city to start a threshold-based Heat Action Plan in 2013.

**Read more:** [Heat strokes in India: Reasons and Impacts – Explained, pointwise](#)

The IMD now predicts the temperature level for the next five days in more than 500 cities and all districts of India.

### **How can heat strokes be fatal?**

**Read here:** [In Maharashtra heatstroke deaths, the critical factor of humidity](#)

### **About the history of heat strokes**

**Global level:** Heat stroke deaths have plagued various armies for centuries. More recently, devastating heat waves occurred in Chicago in 1995 and the European heat wave in 2003.

**Indian level:** Traditionally, most cultures in India have words to describe heat stroke — such as “loo” in Hindi and other languages. As Indians are used to hot weather and the country has several other pressing tasks. So there has been a weak national commitment.

**Read more:** [HAPless In Heat – As extreme summer temperatures hit many parts of India, are govts thinking of vulnerable groups?](#)

### **What are the ideal solutions for heat waves?**

**Prepare individual HAPs:** The World Meteorological Organisation has declared that the past six years have been the hottest globally, indicating the increasing pace of global warming. Hence, it is imperative that all cities, districts and villages in India prepare for heat waves.

For this, each city and district should appoint a “heat officer” who will ensure that the heat action plan is prepared and implemented. The plan has to be revisited every year and revised when new features are required to protect people.

**Role of local government:** The local city or district governments have to take the historical temperatures of the cities and issue a red alert if it is in the 99th percentile, an orange alert if it is in the 95th percentile and above, and a yellow alert if it is the 90th percentile and above.

Encourage people to carry water while going out and cover their heads or use an umbrella to prevent direct exposure to sunlight.

**Long-term solutions:** Long-term measures like the greening of cities by increasing the tree cover, painting roofs white (cool roofs) to reflect sunlight and heat, and use of low-energy cooling devices such as fans and coolers will also help to reduce the effect of increasing heat.

**Prepare heat wave mortality data:** India needs to correlate the daily all-cause mortality with daily temperatures for the last 15-20 years. India also needs to capture and analyse all-cause

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mortality and hospitalisation in every city and correlate it with daily maximum and minimum temperatures. This will inform authorities if mortality and morbidity are within the usual limits. Overall, systematic steps are required to protect people from heat wave-related mortality and morbidity. This requires inter and intra-departmental coordination and top-level commitment.

**Read more: [Heatwaves & Cool Heads – We shouldn't panic about summer extremes, because there are well-understood solutions. The trick is to implement them smartly](#)**

### 79. [The third-gen web is about public good](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “The third-gen web is about public good” published in “The Hindu” on 27th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Awareness in the field of IT and computer

**News-** A 2021 report by the U.S.- India Strategic Partnership Forum states that the third-gen web will be crucial for India to realise its \$1.1 trillion digital asset opportunity by 2032.

#### **What are some facts about the third-generation web?**

Some experts term the third-gen web as ‘**Web3**’, while others use the term ‘**Web 3.0**’.

Web3 is **decentralised, privacy-oriented, blockchain-driven and crypto-asset friendly**.

Web 3.0 upholds the **property of the ‘semantic web,’** which is powered by AI. Semantic web has the ability to **recombine information** available on different websites to **generate new content and knowledge resources** that are more authentic and creative.

Followers of Web 3.0 claim that their version has **robust capability on the data analytics front**. So, it will create far **better search engines**.

Web3 seeks to radically transform the manner in which data is **generated, monetized, shared, and circulated**. It advocates **decentralized data storage systems**.

Web3 has file-sharing systems such as the **Interplanetary File System** which are **cryptographically protected**. It is more **secure and capable** of functioning without the Internet and blockchains. In this manner, Web3 seeks to overcome the **data storage barriers of blockchains**.

Web3’s boldest element is the **strategic role assigned to non- custodial wallets**. It functions as **digital passports** for users to access **blockchain-enabled transaction platforms**.

These wallets aid the creation of an **ownership economy**. Here, creators themselves control their content. Fundamentally, they work as digital **proof of identity**.

Web3 seeks to replace **micro-economic organizations** with **decentralized autonomous organizations**.

At a more macro level, it seeks to create a **distributed economic system**. Here, special classes of native digital tokens and cryptocurrencies would form the **media of monetary circulation**.

#### **How can India benefit from the third-generation web?**

Design-related innovations of India’s handicraft industry are not protected by **Intellectual Property rights**. The digital tokens minted by Web 3 platforms would enable our handicraft enterprises to **secure their innovations**.

Web 3-based instruction tools enable the **rapid dissemination of grassroots innovations** from master artisans to fellow members. It would **improve the economic fortunes** of craftsmen and artisan communities in north-east, western and peninsular India.

India’s major **digital public infrastructure push** and the large-scale **deployment of Internet of Things (IoT)** in rural development projects offer major possibilities for deploying Web 3 in rural areas.

There has been a **rapid rise in community data**. But this resource remains largely untapped due to a lack of data **analytics capabilities at the community level**. This limitation can be overcome by **Web3 analytics systems**.

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Web 3.0 can also yield insights from large volumes of **community data**, generated by **IoT-enabled development programmes** such as the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Web 3.0's natural advantage of facilitating **'analytics at the edge'** provides considerable scope for mapping the water use habits of communities.

Similarly, **early warning systems for floods** will improve with Web 3.0 due to **data analytics facilities** being obtained at the sub-basin level. Thus Web 3.0 will have a **transformative role** in regionally disadvantaged areas.

India's **National Blockchain Strategy 2021** proposes to explore **tokenization and apply blockchains solutions** for development programmes. A third-gen web strategy can be helpful in achieving it.

### [80. Our budget speeches capture the evolution of government policy](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Our budget speeches capture the evolution of government policy"** published in **Mint** on **27<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Budgetary allocation**

**Relevance:** **About the evolution of focus areas in the Budget speech**

**News:** The article discusses the focus areas of budget speeches from the 1990s to the present time.

Budget speeches provide a broad outline of the government focus areas and policies, they are going to follow in the near future.

#### **What are the focus areas of the budget speeches from the 1990s?**

The budget speeches in India have focused on eight broad themes – **(i)** infrastructure, **(ii)** technology and innovation, **(iii)** social security, **(iv)** human development, **(v)** food and agriculture, **(vi)** demographics, **(vii)** fiscal policy and **(viii)** boosting national income.

#### **How did some of these focus areas evolve during the course of the budget speeches over the years?**

**Infrastructure:** The announcement of infrastructure projects such as new railway lines, national highways, rural roads and port development has been a key part of the budget speeches.

Budget speeches of past decades talked of building basic infrastructure like roads and ports whereas **now speeches emphasize on connecting and building synergies between existing infrastructure**, freight corridors, logistics, etc.

India's gross fixed capital formation (**GFCF**) as a share of GDP (at current prices) has grown from 23% in the 1990s to 28% in the 2000s and to 30% in the 2010s. **GFCF is expected to be 29% of GDP in 2022-23.**

**The central government aims to double its capital expenditure** to 3.3% of GDP in 2023-24 from an average of 1.7% of GDP in the 2010s.

**Technology and Innovation:** Over the last 30 years, the central government has steadily adopted advancements in digital technology to improve administration and the delivery of welfare services.

**The share of electronic payments in total retail payments (in value terms) is estimated to have grown from 11% to 86%.**

**Climate Change:** There has been focus on adapting and mitigating the dangers of anthropogenic climate change in the recent budget speeches.

Efforts to fight climate change increased in the early 2010s and this decade's budgets extensively talk about increasing solar generation capacity, lowering carbon emissions and encouraging sustainable mobility.

**Demographics:** There has also been focus on using the word urban more than rural. It is because **the proportion of India's population living in urban areas has increased from 25% to 35% over the last three decades.**

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Similarly, the mention of items relating to food and agriculture has declined, although budget speeches continue to appeal to 'farmers' as before.

**Social Security and Human Development:** The delivery of welfare remains a critical component of budget speeches.

The emphasis on human development through health and education has grown within welfare services, whereas **the emphasis on social security such as pensions and food appear to have diminished.**

The most recent budget laid emphasis on skilling and training across industries.

**Must Read:** [Union Budget 2023-24: Key Highlights – Explained](#)

**What lies ahead?**

Since 2019-20, the government's narrative has become more focused on building infrastructure, fostering digitization and ensuring targeted welfare delivery.

Given that India is still developing into an economic power, **it is important to continuously monitor and assess the Center's performance on these fronts.**

### [81. Why have Maoists killed again — and why do they repeatedly attack in Chhattisgarh?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article **"Why have Maoists killed again — and why do they repeatedly attack in Chhattisgarh?"** published in **The Indian Express** on **27<sup>th</sup> April 2023.**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Internal Security – Naxalism

**Relevance:** About Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)

**News:** Ten personnel of the Chhattisgarh Police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) and the civilian driver of their vehicle were reported killed in an IED attack by Maoists in the Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh.

**Why have the Maoists carried out the attack in Chhattisgarh now?**

The CPI(Maoist) carries out Tactical Counter Offensive Campaigns (TCOCs) between February and June every year, in order to inflict casualties on security forces.

This period is chosen because with the onset of the monsoon in July, it becomes difficult to conduct offensive operations in the jungles due to tall grasses and overflowing nullahs.

**What is the current situation of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in the country?**

According to the government, **Maoist violence in the country has gone down by 77% since 2010.** The number of deaths has also come down by 90%.

The government has cut the number of districts declared to be Naxal-affected from over 200 in the early 2000s to just 90 now, and claims that **the geographical spread of violence is actually restricted to just 45 districts.**

**What is the situation of Maoists in Chhattisgarh?**

**It is the only state in the country where Maoists continue to have a significant presence and retain the capability to conduct big attacks.**

According to government data, in the last five years (2018-22), **Chhattisgarh accounted for more than a third of all Maoist-related violence in this period.**

However, the numbers of deaths of security forces personnel have risen as well as fallen in this period.

**Why does Chhattisgarh continue to remain troubled by Maoists?**

Special forces of the local police were raised in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand to fight with Maoists. They played an important role in making these states rid of Maoists.

However, **Chhattisgarh did not have any such special forces by that time.** Due to which, Maoists from other states moved to Chhattisgarh. This made Chhattisgarh a concentrated zone of Maoist influence.

Moreover, **the lack of roads in the interiors of Bastar has hampered security forces' activities.**

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There is also **minimal presence of the administration** in the interiors of South Bastar, allowing Maoists to continue their influence in the region.

**Must Read:** [Tackling the Maoists: On left-wing extremism](#)

**How has the Centre responded to help Maoists affected states?**

The Centre has supported LWE states through **CRPF**, Security Related Expenditure (**SRE**), Special Infrastructure Scheme (**SIS**) and **Special Central Assistance** for building infrastructure such as roads in LWE districts.

**In Chhattisgarh**, the CRPF has increased its presence by opening new camps in the jungles of South Bastar.

CRPF has also raised a **Bastariya Battalion in Chhattisgarh**. The recruits for this battalion are taken from the local population, who know the language and terrain, and could generate intelligence.

Further, Centre is pushing for the **erection of mobile towers in the interiors**, which would help the local people connect with the mainstream, and also generate technical intelligence.

The Centre has also used the National Investigation Agency (**NIA**) and the **Enforcement Directorate** to target CPI(Maoist) cadres, leaders, and supporters in order to stop their finances.

### 82. Performance of SEBI: Sebi at age 31. Or is it 35?

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Sebi at age 31. Or is it 35?**" published in the **Business Standard** on **28th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS-3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

**Relevance:** About the performance of SEBI.

**News:** Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) recently unveiled a new logo on the occasion of its 35th anniversary. However, the Sebi Act came in 1992, which is only 31 years ago.

**About the history of SEBI**

The journey of SEBI can be seen as emanating from the G S Patel committee of 1984. In 1988, a non-statutory SEBI was constituted, through an administrative resolution of the Government of India. In 1992, Parliament passed the SEBI Act.

Significance of SEBI's formation: **a)** The statutory SEBI of 1992 is the first regulator in India to be legislatively autonomous in the area of human resource and finance, **b)** SEBI was the first of the full and modern regulators in India.

**About the performance of SEBI**

**No market scams:** Since the Ketan Parekh scandal of the early 2000s, there have been no serious market scams under its watch.

**Impressive rise of Market capitalisation:** The gross domestic product to market capitalisation ratio, which was 0.123 in 1989-90 had risen to 1.115 in 2021-22.

**Other areas:** Such as assets under management of mutual funds, the total number of dematerialised accounts, dematerialised turnover, number of derivatives contracts, etc, have all grown exponentially.

Financial reforms also played a role in these improvements primarily through **(a)** the reduction of capital controls and **(b)** the emergence of equity market liquidity and market efficiency.

**What are the challenges SEBI need to work upon?**

**Issue with the turnover ratio:** The turnover ratio (TR) is calculated by dividing the trading volume of the latest one year by the current market capitalisation.

The baseline adopted for the turnover ratio is of 2003-04. In 2003-04, the trading volume of the spot market was ~11.86 trillion and the turnover ratio was 1.34. In 2022-23, the corresponding values were ~25.8 trillion and 0.54.

Over this 20-year period, the turnover ratio of the Indian equity spot market actually went down. This requires fresh thinking about the functioning of SEBI and the exchanges.

### **What more should be done?**

**Focus on market performance:** Financial economic policy should focus less on the market capitalisation of the equity market, and more on the extent to which the securities markets are deep and liquid. The key attributes of this are market depth, market resiliency and market efficiency.

Overall, India needs to create better regulations governing the working of the equity market to generate better liquidity and market efficiency.

### 83. [Finance is the binding constraint in efforts to fight climate change](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Finance is the binding constraint in efforts to fight climate change**” published in **Live Mint** on **28<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment – Climate Change

**Relevance:** concerns associated with climate finance

**News:** Countries around the world are adopting climate mitigation technologies to tackle climate change. However, climate finance still remains a hindrance towards adopting such technologies.

### **What are different climate mitigation technologies being adopted and what are the concerns associated with them?**

**Renewable Power:** The most mitigation technologies being adopted are solar, wind, hydropower, etc. The cost of solar panels, wind turbines, storage batteries and other components have declined dramatically such that the cost of renewable power is now comparable to fossil-fuel based power.

However, **despite the low cost of renewable power, renewable energy still accounts for only around 15% of global power generation.**

**Green Hydrogen:** The cost of [green hydrogen](#) has been dependent on **the cost of electrolyzers**, which has come down, making green hydrogen commercially viable and attracting large-scale corporate investment, including in India.

**However, despite this, the rollout of green hydrogen on a scale is just starting.**

**Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CSS):** [CCS technologies](#) are needed to capture carbon and store it till it can be broken down for commercial use.

However, **existing CSS technologies are very expensive.** Much investment is required in R&D to reduce costs before CSS technologies become commercially viable.

**Carbon Sink:** Terrestrial and underwater forests are the natural carbon sinks that contain the carbon load in the atmosphere. But the level of emissions has gone far beyond the capacity of natural ‘carbon sinks’ to absorb the additional carbon load.

Hence, to lower the ambient carbon load and eventually reverse global warming, **it is necessary to invest heavily in R&D to create technologies that synthetically imitate and improve the capacity of natural carbon sinks.**

These all imply that vast amounts of capital are required to successfully address the climate crisis.

As per the [Emission Gap Report 2022](#), the current annual investment in climate finance of about \$571 billion needs to rise to at least \$1.7-2 trillion.

### **What measures can be taken for climate finance?**

**First, Global public sector finance** can be considered to finance global public goods.

However, the report of the G20-appointed Committee to Review the Multilateral Development Banks’ (MDBs) Capital Adequacy Framework indicates that **MDBs may at best generate additional assistance of \$1 trillion for all purposes. There is doubt even over this amount.**



**Second**, Private capital may be relied upon and may act as an alternative to public capital. However, **most of this capital originates in advanced countries and would not easily flow to tropical developing countries.**

**Third**, along with private capital flows, **developing countries must focus on creating a suitable ecosystem** including universally accepted concepts, definitions and standards for climate finance, appropriate rating systems and technical assessment methodologies.

**Fourth**, developing countries will also require **de-risking of such private capital flows, along with its attendant moral hazard.** MDBs can play a crucial role by providing credit guarantees.

### 84. [Not by 'Vande Bharat' alone](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "Not by 'Vande Bharat' alone" published in "The Hindu" on 28th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Infrastructure

**Relevance-** Issues related to railway

**News-** The article explains the overemphasis on Vande Bharat trains

#### **What are the issues with railways in India?**

The **Annual Plan outlay** of the Indian Railways was ₹1,09,935 crore in 2016-17 in the last Railway Budget. It has increased to ₹2,60,200 crore in the Budget for 2023-24. This is an **increase of 137%**

unprecedented levels of investment to build rail infrastructure are a welcome development. But these investments must translate into **concrete progress towards capacity building.**

There are issues related to **passenger and freight traffic.** The **rail share of freight** carried was reduced from 51.5% in 2008-09 to 32.4% in 2018-19 for leads over 300 km. Almost the entire increase in volume of traffic carried by rail over the decade 2008-09 to 2018-19 has been in **short lead traffic.**

55% of the increase was through the transport of just one commodity, that is coal. The higher levels of traffic being achieved is not accompanied by **diversification of commodities.**

There are issues related to **punctuality.** Published statistics for punctuality usually are above 90%. But these figures are adjusted and only the **destination arrival time** is considered.

More than a decade ago, an exercise was undertaken to know the status of all passenger trains in the Indian Railways network on a real time basis. The punctuality of all passenger-carrying trains at any given time hovered around 60%.

#### **What is the way forward to improve the performance of the Indian railway?**

The **National Rail Plan 2030** envisages raising the rail share in freight traffic *vis-à-vis* roadways from 27% to 45% by 2050. It calls for raising the **average speed of goods trains** to 50 kilometres per hour from the present 25 kmph and **reduction in tariff rates** for freight by up to 30%.

There is a need for a **radical shift in punctuality.** Stations in the Indian Railways network can be **remodelled to 'international standards. Japanese Railways** reckon the punctuality of their high-speed trains in seconds. The Indian Railways should aim to be at least within five minutes of the scheduled time.

There is a need to move away from the **traditional concept of destination punctuality** and evolve an **index of punctuality** that will also reflect the punctuality at select intermediate stations. With developments in IT and data analytics, this should be possible.

The government should consider tabling an **annual report on the performance of the Railways** in Parliament on the **lines of the annual Economic Survey** prepared by the Finance Ministry ahead of the General Budget.

85. [Should India consider phasing out nuclear power?](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Should India consider phasing out nuclear power?” published in “The Hindu” on 28th April 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Energy

**Relevance-** Issues related to nuclear energy

**News-** The article explains the relevance of nuclear power for future energy needs.

**What is the global scenario of nuclear energy?**

The use of nuclear power is **rising even in Europe and the U.S.** China has been surging ahead on nuclear power.

South Korea’s new president has changed the **energy policy** and committed to increasing the share of nuclear power in the country’s energy mix to **30% by 2030.**

**Japan is restarting nuclear reactors.** 10 have been restarted following years of inspection and upgrading safety systems.

The U.K. has said that without scaling up nuclear power, it won’t be possible to **decarbonise the electricity sector.**

**What is the outlook for nuclear power, especially when solar and wind power are becoming far more popular?**

Nuclear will have to be included in a **mix of energy sources.** It is **firm, dispatchable power,** while wind and solar are **intermittent or variable.** Some people say batteries will be the answer. But batteries are very **expensive and have an environmental impact.**

unless something can displace it entirely. There is no firm alternative to coal power to date.

Resistance to nuclear energy is also driven by fears about **safety, nuclear proliferation.** Some of those remain, but a lot has been diminished, partly post-Ukraine. The nuclear industry is moving towards **‘passive safety’ designs.**

Older designs required **active cooling pumps.** But, new systems will **gradually and gracefully control temperature,** even if power fails. There are also coal mine disasters, transport disasters, and local air pollution.

Another challenge is **cost.** That is an area of worry, because of **cost overruns.** But now there are new designs like **small modular reactors.** There is a belief that this will address the **cost structure** quite a bit.

**What are safety issues regarding radioactivity from spent fuels and nuclear liability issues?**

One of the things that need to be realised is the **amount of fuel.** Kudankulam requires only 25 tonnes of low enriched uranium fuel over a year.

Compared to it, coal plants of similar capacity require approximately five million tonnes of coal, and coal **produces ash.** Power plants in the country have **huge ash ponds.** Ash also contains many **heavy metals,** which are detrimental to the water source.

Regarding nuclear liability, it is not money. But in case of an accident, the supplier of components to the nuclear plant is exposed to **various liabilities, including criminal liability.** That is something which basically no Western company will accept.

**What are the steps needed to be taken for proper use of nuclear energy potential in India?**

India has very **limited growth potential** for hydropower because of **conserving biodiversity and the costs of rehabilitating and compensating landowners.**

The alternative to coal is nuclear power. India has **210 gigawatts of coal capacity,** and it produces 73% of electricity of India. Nuclear is only around 3.2%. Business **as usual** cannot continue.

One of the major reasons for the lack of growth in nuclear power is because of **monopoly.** All reactors are operated by the **Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited.** There is a need for a **civilian nuclear programme.**

Other government companies like the NTPC should be allowed to produce nuclear power. To achieve **‘net zero’ by 2070,** there is a need for **100 gigawatts by 2050.**

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There is a need for a **combination of small modular reactors and large reactors**, but it cannot be done by one company. It has to be done by **multiple companies**.

### **What is the way forward for the energy sector in India?**

There is a need for a **range of options**. Energy is not going to be the one thing that solves all our problems. It's going to be a **mix of supply side and demand side**. There is a need for a **portfolio of technologies** within the nuclear sector and outside the nuclear sector.

The energy policy should be about **enabling frameworks** for all technologies. It should not be a bet for one technology.

### 86. Wrong Number: Life Isn't Math

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Wrong Number: Life Isn't Math – When policymakers privilege numeracy skills over other learning aptitudes, they don't recognise that lived experience & people's stories are key variables in any analysis”** published in **The Times of India** on **29<sup>th</sup> April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Growth & Development

**Relevance:** concerns associated with numerical data

**News:** UK prime minister Rishi Sunak has proposed making the study of mathematics compulsory for all students in England up to the age of 18.

### **Why has the UK PM made mathematics compulsory?**

**There is a popular sentiment in the UK that says it is all right to be bad in mathematics.**

Therefore, he thinks that low skill in mathematics has kept his country from surging ahead.

However, his views that a strong hold in mathematics is required for a country's growth is erroneous.

### **Why are the views of the UK PM regarding mathematics is incorrect?**

**Numeracy and prosperity don't always go together. For instance,** the world's richest economy, the United States, ranks 38 globally in mathematics.

**In terms of numeracy,** the UK ranks above Germany but below China, yet Germany has a higher GDP per capita than Britain while China's GDP per capita is lower.

Therefore, for a country to progress, there is also other factors responsible rather than having only numerical skills.

Moreover, as per **John Maynard Keynes**, a great economist, mathematical economies are a mixture of numbers that intend to hide the complexities of the real world.

### **What are the concerns with mathematical numbers in an economy?**

**Mathematics has done a lot of good in policy making but it has also created a profession where numbers matter more than lived experience.**

**For example,** in measuring poverty, everything depends on what statistics tell us regardless of whether these figures reflect the real world.

**For measuring poverty in India,** it was decided to include the basket of consumption in the calculations of poverty.

However, there was a need to distinguish in the consumption basket between items that people earn and items they get as dole.

This is because a rise in the consumption level signifies poverty removal. However, a rise in the dole is also a relief for the poor but it does not get calculated.

Therefore, even if dole increases the numbers signifying poverty removal won't change. **This is how numbers play a role in calculation but does not represent the real world.**

A similar concern with the number is that the **National Sample Survey's data on rural India is unhelpful for a farmer.**

**As per NSS,** a farmer is defined as “a person who possesses some land and is engaged in some agricultural activities on that land during the last 365 days”.

The word **'during'** used in the definition not only keeps out the rural landless but also obscures the fact that most farmers rarely farm most of the time.

**Such definitions make numerical data collecting easier, but they distort the picture of rural India** by exaggerating the number of farmers and agricultural households.

### **What is the way ahead?**

It is not wise to simply rely on the numerical data and propose numeracy as the only way to prosper for a country and the people. **Real world experiences are more important than just numerical skills.**

### 87. IPL, an opportunity to bat for climate action

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"IPL, an opportunity to bat for climate action"** published in **The Hindu** on **29th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS-3: Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation

**Relevance:** About the environmental footprint of IPL.

**News:** The 16th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) has started. IPL has contributed significantly to India's economy through sports tourism, employment generation, and infrastructure development. An event as big as the IPL also has a significant environmental footprint.

### **About the environmental footprint of IPL**

Large-scale sporting events such as the IPL have a complex and multifaceted impact on the environment.

**Overall Emissions:** For the IPL, studies estimate that a single match produces emissions in the range of 10,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e to 14,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (or tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent). Over a season, this figure can reach up to 750k tCO<sub>2</sub>e to 900k tCO<sub>2</sub>e.

To contextualise these emissions, it would take tropical forests the size of Singapore over a whole year to absorb these emissions.

**House emissions:** Emissions assessments show that the emissions generated by sports venues only account for about 5% of their total. Whereas digital viewership during events such as the IPL contributes to more than three fourths of the total emissions footprint.

**Other emissions:** Data centres are the second most significant contributor to emissions during IPLs. Spectator travel, luxury accommodation, and backup generators round up the list of top five emitters.

The lack of reliable data on carbon emissions hinders the ability to plan and execute effective policies.

**Read more:** [India's Strategy for Net Zero – Explained, pointwise](#)

### **What are the impacts of climate change on cricket?**

The impact of climate change is being felt across multiple aspects of cricket.

**Changing weather patterns** are affecting players, spectators, and ground conditions. For example, a 2019 report by the World Cricket Committee found that climate change is altering the sport's landscape, impacting the length of the cricket season, and disrupting the playability of pitches.

**Impact of heat waves:** Increasing intensity of heat waves and worsening air quality in India have raised concerns for player safety during some of the matches.

**Note:** In 2018, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) signed an agreement to implement the concept of 'zero waste' or 'green protocol' to reduce wastage from cricket stadiums.

### **Why India should focus on IPL to reduce its environmental footprint?**

**a)** The IPL's broad social platform can influence attitudes towards sustainability and reach out to people from all backgrounds and areas, **b)** By promoting education and awareness around environmental issues, the IPL can encourage a healthier, more sustainable lifestyle, **c)** An event

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as big as the IPL is an opportunity to build awareness about the Net Zero transition, expanding on existing efforts and accelerating the journey to Net Zero.

**Read more:** [Achieving Net Zero by 2070 and the Associated Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

### **What more India should do to reduce the environmental footprint of sports events?**

**Properly measure the emissions and track its reduction:** India should adopt climate tech and leverage existing tech advancements should be used to properly measure the environmental footprint of sports events. This data can be used to set targets, track progress, and select cost-effective alternatives.

**Change the data centre:** A transition to renewable energy sources for the data centres and data streaming infrastructure can reduce the IPL's carbon emissions by over 10%.

**Encourage public transportation:** The government and sports authorities should incentivise and use of public transport to and from stadiums. This can help reduce travel emissions by as much as 85% in sports events.

**Change at the domestic level:** Simple changes such as replacing LCD screens in homes with energy- efficient LED displays can reduce the emission from each TV screen by 35%- to 40%. This will result in as much as a 20% reduction in the overall carbon footprint of such highly televised sports tournaments.

### [88. Renewable targets outstrip policy enablers](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“Renewable targets outstrip policy enablers”** published in the **Business Standard** on **29th April 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS-3: Energy

**Relevance:** About renewable energy targets.

**News:** Indian renewable energy project developers are facing progressively higher hurdles each year. This raises the question of whether India needs new targets or supportive policies.

#### **About India's previous renewable energy targets**

India set a previous target in 2015 for variable renewable energy installations (VRE) of 175 gigawatts (GW) by 2022. This included 100 GW from solar power, 60 GW from wind power, 10 GW from bio-power and 5 GW from small hydro power.

#### **What is the performance of India on previous renewable energy targets?**

According to the government, at the last count, VRE capacity totalled around 122GW, or 30% of the 412 GW of installed power capacity in the country.

Another research points out that only around 68% of the 175 GW target was achieved. Nearly 24 GW of solar and hybrid tenders were issued between 2020 and 2021 but only 13-15 GW of capacities were installed in 2022.

#### **About India's updated renewable energy targets**

India set a new tendering target of 250 GW of renewable energy by the financial year 2027-28. This is over twice the yearly bids that have been called for in the past to set up solar facilities and wind farms.

Most of the record 50 GW of renewable tendering annually over five years will comprise solar, with an all-time high of 10 GW allocated for wind capacity.

**Note:** India has around 82 GW of renewable capacity addition at various stages of implementation and about 41 GW under tendering stage. This includes 64 GW of solar, 42 GW of wind power and around 11 GW of biomass power.

**Must read:** [Year End Review 2022- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy](#)

What are the present challenges associated with renewable energy generation?

## OUT OF ALIGNMENT

- New Delhi, this month, set a new tendering target of 250 Gw of renewable energy by financial year 2027-28
- India's lofty targets are also increasingly colliding with a volatile global environment, higher financing costs and supply chain issues
- What industry needs are policy enablers, grid upgrades and incentives for green financing rather than a focus on installations
- Nearly 24 Gw of solar and hybrid tenders were issued between 2020 and 2021 but only 13-15 Gw of capacities were installed in 2022
- Besides lower supply of modules from China, slow installations reflect the imposition of ALMM (Approved List of Models and Manufacturers) on bids after April 2021 and basic customs duty of 40 per cent on modules
- A rise in module prices by 10-15% last fiscal from a year earlier sent capital costs higher by 20-25%, Crisil data shows
- Existing installations were helped in no large part by low cost module imports from China, low import taxes and a freedom to source modules from anywhere in the world

Source: Business Standard

- Variable renewable energy tenders issued annually in India have fallen by 30% since 2019.
  - There are high import taxes and other barriers such as mandating domestic sourcing of solar panels.
  - Lower supply of modules from China, and slow installations indicate the imposition of the ALMM (Approved List of Models and Manufacturers) regime and basic Customs duty of 40% on modules and 25% on cells.
  - High taxes have also impacted capital costs. For instance, there is a rise in module prices by 10-15% last financial year from a year earlier and increases capital costs higher by 20-25%.
  - Distressed discoms will not be able to absorb such high tariffs in a price-sensitive market such as India.
  - The long-term benefits of manufacturing most things locally are also debatable. The programme focus on import barriers and local sourcing rather than on innovation and productivity.
  - India's targets are also colliding with a volatile global environment, higher financing costs and supply chain issues.
- If India is trying to get to net zero by 2070, and generate half of its electricity from non-fossil fuels, then the 50 GW a year of tendering goal needs to be supported by policy measures. \

Read more: [A renewable energy revolution, rooted in agriculture](#)

**What should be done to bring renewables back on track?**

The industry needs **policy enablers, grid upgrades and incentives for green financing** rather than a focus on installations.

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Instead of announcing new goals, the government should **study the reasons** behind India's missing targets and the reason for the slowdown in renewable additions.

The government needs to **ramp up grid infrastructure** to enable the evacuation of high renewable capacity.

India should include **streamlining procedures** and **reducing bureaucratic hurdles** such as using e-tendering platforms and reaching out to more local and international companies.

