



9 PM

Compilation

3rd to 8th July, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. [The master plan and the slaves](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The master plan and the slaves**” published in **The Hindu** on **3th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1-Urbanization

Relevance: Urban planning

News- Amitabh Kant, India’s G20 Sherpa, stressed at a recent Urban-20 City Sherpas’ meet that **a master plan is** crucial to manage urbanisation.

Master Plan is an instrument of governance for urban local bodies (ULBs). It is essentially a spatial plan of land-use allocation supported by bye-laws and development control regulations. The institutional structures, cultures, and practices of ULBs are built around this spatial vision and provision of urban services.

What are problems in master plan?

Firstly, the **master plan instrument is dated and archaic**. It requires an update. The concept, configuration and rationalities of this instrument drafted in the 1950s. For example, the Water Act-1974 focused on industrial pollution only.

Secondly, a master plan is simply a **spatial plan of land-use allocation supported by bye-laws** and development control regulations.

Thirdly, this spatial vision is at the **core of institutional structures** of ULBs. The ULBs are shaped and run by the agenda of regulating spatial growth and they become limited to **these ideas** and conceptions.

Fourthly, the statutory and spatial nature of the master plan can pose **constraints on the programmatic plans**, especially the spatially associated ones such as the plans for protection of water bodies.

Finally, there is no set criteria for mandating a spatial plan to regulate urban growth. Close to **65% of India’s urban settlements** do not have master plans, **according to NITI Aayog**.

What is the way forward?

we must acknowledge that the master plan instrument may be limited by its **archaic conceptions and entrenched institutional cultures**.

2021 report of the NITI Aayog should be prioritized with respect to **spatial (town) planning profession and education**. Recent moves such as **Gati Shakti and Model Rural Transformation Acts** are a reflection of this.

There is no need to go far for lessons to do this. Indian cities offer enough experiences to learn from.

India must **reimagine spatial planning** to address the growing and emerging governance challenges of urbanization

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2. [Choose a new palette for India's creative economy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Choose a new palette for India's creative economy**” published in “The Hindu” on 6th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Art and culture

News: The article discusses the challenges faced by Indian artists in promoting their art.

What is creative economy and what is its significance?

The creative economy refers to sectors of an economy that involve the creation and exploitation of creativity or knowledge. It includes areas such as art, music, film, design, and digital content creation. Its significance lies in its contribution to job creation, economic growth, tourism, and exports, and its role in fostering societal development.

Notably, **the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT 2022)** recognized culture's economic importance and transformative power for sustainable development.

What are the challenges faced by Indian artistes?

Economic and market challenges: Indian artists struggle with issues related to economic sustainability and gaining adequate market access to monetize their work.

Preservation of traditional art forms: In the face of rapidly changing societal trends, preserving and promoting traditional art forms presents significant challenges.

Inequalities in representation and support: Artists often face a lack of transparency in the selection process for financial assistance and event organization. Those based outside cities are particularly disadvantaged.

Crime in the art world: Artists must contend with art-related crimes such as theft, forgery, and illicit trafficking. These crimes undermine cultural heritage, financial security, and public trust.

What are the solutions for the creative economy?

Promoting a collaborative cultural economy: Creating a collaborative model that supports the cultural economy is vital. This includes encouraging tech-based start-ups in the arts sector.

Capacity-building centre for artists: A capacity-building centre can offer guidance, technical support, infrastructure, and access to investors, contributing to India's soft power.

Training and professional development: Artists need training, professional development, and market access. Networking within larger communities can also foster knowledge sharing.

Leveraging data analytics: Data analytics can be utilized to foster creative ecosystems that contribute to a sustainable world, highlighting emerging trends and informing policy recommendations.

Facilitation mechanism for artists and entrepreneurs: A facilitation mechanism can focus on fostering knowledge sharing, networking, and economic empowerment for individual artists and creative entrepreneurs. This can be achieved by offering business training, incubating innovative projects, and connecting them with global marketing platforms, tools, and practices. This platform can provide sustainable livelihood solutions for artists and artisans, leveraging the latest Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools to enhance their participation in the business ecosystem.

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3. 'Only by recognising the power & intelligence of the opium poppy can we even begin to make peace with it'

Source– The post is based on the article **“Only by recognising the power & intelligence of the opium poppy can we even begin to make peace with it”** published in **“The Times Group”** on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Modern history

Relevance: Opium trade and Opium war

News-The article is about new book of Amitav Ghosh 'Smoke and Ashes: A Writer's Journey Through Opium's Hidden Histories'. The article discusses the profound impact of the opium trade on the economies and societies of India and China.

What is major issue between India and China?

Between India and China there is a high level of incomprehension. There is a huge historical influence of China on India – both economic and cultural.

However, there is complete lack of understanding of Chinese culture in India. China also lacks the understanding of Indian culture.

How colonial opium trade with China has made the Bihar and Punjab of today?

2 factors that resulted in devastation of Puvanchal region:

First, the resource curse of opium in rich and culturally fertile **Purvanchal region** is responsible for underdevelopment of these regions. While, it helped in industrialisation of England and America, but devastated the agricultural economy of Purvanchal.

After 1857 the **British started recruiting from Punjab**, instead of Bihar. They also started investing massively in the region which accounts for wealthy Punjabis of today.

What are some facts about opium trade during freedom movement?

During the course of Indian freedom Struggle, **from the 1880s onwards** both in India and China there was a **huge movement against opium**.

There were also divergent trajectories of opium trade. Britishers established an **absolute monopoly over opium cultivation** in the **eastern part** of India. In the western part they were resisted by various princely states.

What are present challenges related to opium consumption in present times?

There is **very high rates of addiction** especially in the border state of Punjab and also on the eastern border, the Northeast. In America also, opioids have become a leading cause of death .

How do India and China remember opium trade wars?

In India, very little is taught about opium trade and wars.

Modern China has emerged from the Opium Wars and from the struggle against opium. Wars are memorialised everywhere in China.

One of the major event is the **battle of Sanyuanli** between Indian sepoy and Chinese villagers. This event is considered as founding of nationalism in China

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General Studies Paper –2

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General Studies - 2

1. [The rise of bilateralism](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The rise of bilateralism**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

News: During Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent visit to the United States, six disputes between the countries at the WTO were withdrawn. While India has historically been committed to multilateralism in trade policy, there are indications that this commitment is not being implemented as strongly as before.

Why India historically pursued a multilateral trade policy?

Unlike plurilateral trade pacts, multilateral trading agreements **do not distort trade**.

Unlike bilateral-trade agreements, multilateral trading agreements like WTO **empower even relatively small trading nations** like India. (India’s share in world trade is very small when compared to its population or domestic output.)

Why should India not depend solely on bilateral trade agreements?

Bilateral deals are **inherently unfair** as stronger trading powers tend to dominate, leaving smaller nations vulnerable.

Relying on close strategic partnerships as the basis for good trade relations is unsustainable and unwise. Focus on bilateral agreements over multilateral rules **exposes India to arbitrary shifts in trade policies, influenced by other country**.

India dropped out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and focused on trade deals with countries like Australia instead. This emphasis on free-trade agreements (FTAs) with developed-world partners has **not yielded significant benefits**. Even an India-EU FTA would not have the same impact as restoring the multilateral trading order.

What should be done?

The lack of judges in the WTO appellate body has made the WTO’s dispute resolution process powerless. India should **persuade the US to drop its veto on the appointment of new judges** to the **WTO appellate body**.

2. [Navigating the maze of EU tech Regulations](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Navigating the maze of EU tech Regulations**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations – Effects of policies of developed and developing countries in India

News: The European Union (EU) has agreed on a new Data Act. It became the fifth significant technological legislation in the EU.

This Act aims to regulate how data generated from personal devices and public technology infrastructure should be accessed and handled by companies, both within the EU and worldwide.

What are some salient provisions of the EU’s data act?

The Data Act seeks to prevent Big Tech from collecting personal data of users and treating them as the firms’ personal intellectual property.

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It also allows individuals and small businesses to choose who can handle their personal and non-personal data.

An individual can ask a firm to move his or her data to another firm, potentially leading to rival firms gaining trade secrets.

How does it impact India?

India is planning to regulate personal and non-personal data separately. It will be done by defining an umbrella tech regulation and then form multiple sub-regulations for various sectors. This approach is influenced by the overall structure of EU laws.

However, Indian regulations are unlikely to take the as strict an approach as the EU. Instead, the government might take an ex-ante approach. This approach will leave room for future adjustments, in line with how technologies develop.

3. [A bigger BRICS – Expansion of the group](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**A bigger BRICS – Expansion of the group is in offing, challenge for founder members is to ensure it does not become a Chinese bandwagon**” published in **The Indian Express** on 3rd July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Relevance: challenges associated with the expansion of BRICS

News: Middle-sized countries with strong economies in the global south are looking to join BRICS.

Why are those countries interested in joining BRICS?

BRICS represents 40 percent of the world’s population and 23 percent of global GDP, making it an attractive grouping for other countries.

Further, **the change in the geopolitical shifts in the world from the time of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, has prompted these countries** in the global south to look for a platform that can acknowledge their voice and power. These both are potentially possible in BRICS.

Over 20 countries are in line for membership, with Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, the UAE, Egypt, and Argentina expected to be granted membership this August.

Must Read: [The paradox of BRICS, its new pathway](#)

What are the challenges with expanding BRICS grouping?

An increase in membership is likely to weigh the group in favour of China because some countries waiting to join are also part of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.

This raise concerns that an expanded **BRICS could be seen as a Chinese-led anti-American bloc.**

India, which has been strengthening its bilateral relationship with the US, has been concerned about expansion. **India views China’s role in driving these countries for membership of BRICS along with the support of Russia.**

India also raised its concern in last year’s BRICS that any addition of new members must follow the carefully thought-out objective criteria for membership.

This should be mutually discussed among the present members, so that all are of the same view regarding expansion.

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Further, at the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting last month, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar emphasized the need to consider the ways in which existing BRICS countries collaborate with each other and engages with non-BRICS countries.

Must Read: [BRICS FM meeting in South Africa: What's on the agenda?](#)

What lies ahead?

Despite the concerns, **India may not be able to prevent expansion entirely, as many of the countries are also friends of India.** Hence, India seems to have accepted the possibility of limited addition of five new members.

However, **the challenge would be** for the original BRICS members and the new entrants to ensure that the group does not become a Chinese bandwagon.

4. [Sriram Panchu writes: Governor R N Ravi's actions do not behove his office](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**Sriram Panchu writes: Governor R N Ravi's actions do not behove his office**" published in the "**The Indian Express**" on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues pertaining to federalism

Relevance- Office of Governor

News- The [Governor of Tamil Nadu, R.N. Ravi dismissed V. Senthilbalaji](#), a Minister in the Council of Ministers of Tamil Nadu on June 29, 2023. The Governor later backtracked on his decision late in the night.

How can a Governor handle these types of complicated situations in a better way without any controversy?

Governor should not **create any controversy** and preserve the **dignity of the office**. Then **initially respect** enhances, which gradually create a **reservoir of trust**.

The governor becomes a **wise counsellor**. Her words of **advice and caution**, even on matters outside his **legal purview**, will ordinarily be heeded by a chief minister.

Governors need to try and **emulate distinguished** earlier governors like Gopalkrishna Gandhi and T N Chaturvedi.

What is the way forward for the reform in the office of Governor?

There is value in the post, both for **constitutional and ceremonial functions**. There is a need to **appoint the right persons**, and by a **proper method**. There is a need to **reduce favouritism and reward**.

A **cadre of distinguished persons** from different fields like civil service, armed forces, academics, culture, respected former ministers may be created.

There is a need for **caution on appointment of judges**. A **cooling off period** is required so that the attractions of the post do not deflect the person.

From this panel, a suitable name should be picked in consultation with the chief minister.

What is another issue related to misuse of power by central government agencies?

The number of Opposition party state ministers being investigated, especially by the ED, has gone up dramatically. They are lodged in jail for long periods beyond the time, **reasonably required for custodial interrogation**.

The application of the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act** has led to **inordinate difficulties in securing bail** since the **presumption of innocence** is overturned.

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There is a **serious mixing of criminal investigation and prosecution** with politics. **Probity in governance** is necessary but checks on **political misuse of the enforcement machinery** is also needed.

For more reading- <https://blog.forumias.com/that-wasnt-a-capital-idea-on-ministers-dismissal-by-governor/>

5. Making it count – on NFHS Survey

Source- The post is based on the article **“Making it count”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population. GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance- Issues related to disability

News- The Union government recently decided to drop the disability-specific question from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-6.

What is the reasoning provided by the central government for this decision?

The Ministry of Health and Family responded that **questions about disability** were already asked as part of the **76th round of Sample Registration Survey**, conducted in 2018.

Any **specific information** can be tabulated from the raw data, which is also available in the **public domain**. **Disability data** will not change fast.

How is NFHS more useful in providing more comprehensive data about disability rather than SRS?

The count of **6.1 lakh sample households** that the NFHS relies on, makes the data set **truly representative**.

The **elaborate questions** asked by NFHS will provide **valuable specifics** on the lives of the disabled.

The SRS provides insights into **prevalence and incidence of disability, education level, living arrangements, care-givers, certificate of disability, accessibility and unemployment rate**, among others. But the NFHS asks more **comprehensive questions**.

NFHS seeks answers on **health and nutrition status, access to health schemes, insurance, sexual behaviour, availability of family planning, use of contraception, domestic violence, household amenities and possessions, lifestyle indicators, and access to drinking water and toilets**.

Therefore, NFHS will yield **better, more robust, data** on the disability sector.

What is the way forward to know the prevalence of disability using NFHS?

Health Ministry officials claim that the sole NFHS question on disability too resulted in **under-reporting**. It might be a function of **training for field staff** who ask questions. The state must add questions on disabilities and **train field staff**.

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6. [A case of unchecked power to restrict e-free speech](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A case of unchecked power to restrict e-free speech**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Indian Polity

Relevance: Right to free speech and digital rights

News–The Karnataka High Court judgment against Twitter subverts the procedural safeguards that must be employed while restricting the freedom of speech

What are the issues with Karnataka HC judgement in this case?

The Supreme Court of India upheld the **validity of Section 69A** and the Blocking Rules in **Shreya Singhal vs Union of India**.

However, the Karnataka High Court has held that observations in Shreya Singhal don't call for **providing notice to the users of the content**. It is contrary to judicial precedent set by SC.

The High Court's judgment reveals that one of the reasons was that the content could lead to the spread of “**fake news**” and “**misinformation**”. These are not grounds under which free speech can be **restricted under Article 19(2) and Section 69A**.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that there **must be a direct link** between the speech and the potential threat to public order. However, the High Court is convinced that these blocking orders are “well-reasoned”, even though **no nexus can be established with public order** and the security of the state.

Moreover, the **High Court rejected Twitter's contention** that Section 69A only permits the blocking of specific tweets. **Wholesale blocking of Twitter accounts** amounts to limiting freedom of future speech and expression.

What are the implications of this decision for freedom of speech?

It has the potential of **inducing a chilling effect** on the freedom of speech of online platform users.

The Karnataka High Court's judgment **erodes the principles of natural justice** which dictate for the affected party should be allowed to present their case to the best of their abilities.

Along with the recently amended **IT Rules on fact-checking**, the judgment has the dangerous potential of **reposing untrammelled power in the State** to remove any content that it deems to be unfavourable.

7. [Why Govt is going after 'dark patterns'](#)

Source: This article has been framed based on India Express article “Why Govt is going after ‘dark patterns’”, published on 4th July.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2– Government policies for the various sectors

News: The article discusses the concept of “dark patterns” and the Indian government's initiative to curb their use on e-commerce platforms.

Dark patterns, also known as deceptive patterns, are tricks implemented by websites or apps to manipulate users into doing things they didn't intend to, or to discourage behavior that's not beneficial for companies. The term was coined by Harry Brignull, a London-based user experience (UX) designer, in 2010.

Read More – [Centre to Issue Norms Against 'Dark Patterns' in Online Advertisements](#)

For example, Instagram simplifies signing up and logging in, but makes deleting or deactivating one's account a more complicated procedure to subtly discourage users from doing so.

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The Indian government has asked e-commerce companies to stop using dark patterns on their platforms. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has set up a 17-member task force to prepare guidelines to protect consumers.

What was the need of guidelines against dark patterns?

Numerous websites and apps trick their users into allowing them to track their location or gather their data. For example, as per Vox report “Instagram uses terms like ‘activity’ and ‘personalised’ instead of ‘tracking’ and ‘targeting’”. The user does not realize that what they’re actually giving the app permission to do.

It can lead to consumers making decisions that they may not have made otherwise.

This can result in consumers spending more money, sharing more personal information, or having difficulty in opting out of services.

The government’s move to curb the use of dark patterns is aimed at protecting consumers from such manipulative practices.

Government initiatives against dark patterns?

The Ministry has started classifying complaints received on the National Consumer Helpline 1915 to compile information on dark patterns.

This information can be used by the Central Consumer Protection Authority to initiate action under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

What actions have been taken in other countries against dark patterns?

The United States and the United Kingdom have enacted laws to restrict the use of dark patterns.

In 2011, California introduced amendments to the California Consumer Privacy Act, which aimed to prohibit the use of dark patterns.

UK released guidelines in April 2019, which were later made legally binding under the Data Protection Act of 2018. These guidelines prohibited companies from employing “nudges” to influence underage users into selecting low privacy settings.

8. [For science to flourish: National Research Foundation plugs a policy gap](#)

Source: This article has been framed based on India Express article “**For science to flourish: National Research Foundation plugs a policy gap**”, published on 4th July.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2,

News: The article discusses the establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF) in India, which has been approved by the Union Cabinet.

The NRF is set to provide high-level strategic direction to scientific research in India, aligning with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.

Read More – [India’s National Research Foundation \(NRF\) explained](#)

What is the Significance of NRF?

The establishment of the NRF could lead to a more coordinated and strategic approach to scientific research in India.

It could also stimulate increased spending by industry on research and development, which could lead to more innovation and economic growth.

The NRF will seed, nurture and promote research, innovation and development across universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories.

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It will fill the funding gap between central and state universities. The NRF will prioritise research funding for institutions set up in states.

The NRF will also encourage young researchers who have gone abroad to do their PhD or post-doctoral work to return to India. It will increase the Intellectual capital.

What are the challenges in achieving the NRF's aim?

A significant problem faced by scientists is that even after scientific projects are reviewed and sanctioned, fund-release is not timely or adequate. Therefore, fund-release must be thoroughly investigated and correctional steps must be implemented.

It is important to ensure that basic research and small-scale research proposals are not ignored.

Merger of government science institutions under an umbrella may promote crucially important interdisciplinary research. However, with the merger it may happen that funding for some domains get badly reduced.

9. [Clearing the water](#)

Source: This article has been framed based on India Express article "**Clearing the water**", published on 4th July.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – Social Issues – Availability of drinking water

News: In 2019, government promised that rural households would be assured of piped, potable water by 2024. However, the progress has been slower than expected due to various challenges.

What is the present status of potable water?

In 2019, only about 3.2 crore, or about 16% of rural households, had access to piped water. Today, those figures stand at 64%, a substantial increase but still below the target.

The Jal Shakti Ministry has been working on the 'Har Ghar Jal' mission to provide piped water connections to households. Since 2019, about nine crore households have gained access to piped water.

Some of the large States with 100% compliance, i.e., Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, already started on a fairly high base in 2019.

The figures are based on the data reported by States.

What are the factors that are hindering the progress?

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war have reportedly slowed down the mission. It has created hurdles in accessing pipes and civil construction, which is necessary for the project.

There is a discrepancy in villages declared as 'har ghar jal' and the certified villages. States have reported only 1,68,157 villages as 'Har Ghar Jal' and only about 35% of these villages have been certified, which means gram panchayats have reported full compliance.

10. [How the QS World University Rankings reinforce elitism and caste bias](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**How the QS World University Rankings reinforce elitism and caste bias**" published in **The Indian Express** on 4th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues Related with the Education System

Relevance: About the QS World University Ranking 2024

News: Recently, the QS World University Ranking 2024 was released.

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What are the findings of the QS World University Ranking 2024?

Nine out of the top ten spots were taken by universities from the US and Europe.

The National University of Singapore (NUS) became the first Asian university to come under the top 10, recording the eighth position.

In terms of Indian institutions, IIT-Bombay achieved a significant milestone by making it to the top 150 universities list, ranking at 149.

The ranking criteria comprise the following nine indicators: 1) Academic Reputation, 2) Employer Reputation, 3) Faculty Student Ratio, 4) Citations per Faculty, 5) International Faculty Ratio, 6) International Student Ratio, 7) International Research Network, 8) Employment Outcomes and 9) Sustainability.

What are the concerns with the QS rankings?

Out of the nine indicators, Academic Reputation and Citations per Faculty collectively have 50 percent of the weightage.

In the context of India, these indicators raise questions not only about elite institutions but also about individual faculty members and their research, **as both reputation and citation value of each individual carry significant weightage.**

Most estimates in India suggest that 98% of professors and 90% of assistant or associate professors in institutions like IISc and IITs come from the upper castes. This shows a significant disparity in representation.

This also implies that the knowledge base and perspectives of only 20% of the population dominate at least 90% in the respective field.

Considering these factors, academics from IIT Bombay will most likely nominate peers from similar institutions known for conducting prominent research, to the Academic Reputation survey.

This raises concerns about the representation of their work and citation.

Furthermore, the number of citations holds significant weight in determining legitimacy and can impact factors such as promotions and salaries.

Without proper representation, **researchers from marginalized backgrounds may face even greater challenges in** gaining recognition, diminishing their citational value regardless of the merit of their work.

Hence, **the QS World University Ranking does not take these factors into consideration** and publishes a report preserving global educational inequalities.

What is the way ahead?

This lack of representation in the higher educational institutions in India keeps the knowledge and experience of the majority in this country unexplored or invisible.

Additionally, **it maintains elitism in the higher education system.** The cyclical nature preserves the status quo, ensuring that institutions remain inaccessible and unassailable.

Hence, even if there has been improvement in the ranking of IIT-Bombay, it is not a matter of pride as there are structural flaws in the education system, which needs to be addressed.

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11. [Eradicating sickle cell disease, securing the future of India's tribal communities](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Eradicating sickle cell disease, securing the future of India's tribal communities**” published in “**Indian Express**” on **4th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2- Issues related to Health

News: Recently, PM Modi launched the Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission.

What is Sickle cell disease?

Sickle cell is a **genetic disorder** in which a person's red blood cells become distorted and take on a sickle-like shape. This disease is **commonly found among tribal communities**.

Sickle cell disease exists in **two forms** within the human body.

One is the **Sickle Cell trait**, in which the individual does not exhibit any disease or symptoms, and lives a normal life.

The second form is characterised by the **presence of symptoms** related to sickle cell disease.

If two individuals with Sickle Cell trait marry each other, there is a high probability that their child will have Sickle Cell disease.

How the government plans to eradicate sickle cell disease?

The government plans to eradicate sickle cell disease through two approaches.

The first approach focuses on prevention, ensuring that new cases are not born.

The second approach involves managing the treatment and providing adequate healthcare facilities for individuals already affected by the disease.

The government will provide for screening of individuals for Sickle Cell trait before marriage, to prevent the spread of the disease.

After screening, individuals will be provided with smart cards in their local language, enabling prospective partners to easily determine whether their future children will be affected by Sickle Cell disease or not.

Individuals identified with the disease through screening will undergo regular testing, receive treatment and medication, vaccinations for other diseases, get dietary support, and have access to timely counselling services.

Health and Wellness Centres established through the Ayushman Bharat scheme will also play a significant role.

12. [Lessons from the fracas over foodgrains](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Lessons from the fracas over foodgrains**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 5th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Government policies and intervention & GS 3 – issue related to poverty and hunger

News: The Karnataka government recently decided to convert the promised Anna Bhagya scheme to a direct benefit transfer temporarily. It has brought into focus the limits of a state government's policy intervention on a crucial matter such as food security.

What is Karnataka's Anna Bhagya Scheme?

The Anna Bhagya scheme, an initiative by Karnataka, aims to supply 5 kg of free rice monthly to 4.42 crore beneficiaries. This group consists of 45 lakh Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) cardholders, 3.58 crore Priority Household (PHH) cardholders, and 39 lakh cardholders from a

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special PHH category within Karnataka. These provisions would be over and above the regular allocations provided under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

What are the Challenges for Karnataka's Anna Bhagya Scheme?

Sudden change in OMSS-D policy: The biggest challenge for the Anna Bhagya scheme was the sudden change in the Open Market Sale Scheme-Domestic (OMSS-D) policy by the central government. The Union Food Ministry stopped the sale of surplus grains to states, under this scheme. The OMSS is now limited to accommodate small and marginal buyers and traders. It was a major route to supplement the allocation for rice-deficit states.

Effective communication gap: There was also a lack of effective communication between different departments at the national level and the state government. If there had been better coordination, the difficulties in launching the scheme could have been mitigated.

Financial burden: Lastly, the financial cost of the scheme is another significant hurdle. With FCI agreeing to supply grains at ₹36.6 per kg, the monthly cost for the state would amount to around ₹840 crore.

Lastly, supplies for the scheme would not have been fulfilled, just by OMSS-D.

What is OMSS Policy?

Read here: [The Open Market Sale Scheme for wheat and rice](#)

Why has the central government shifted the OMSS Policy?

This Shift in policy due to **a)** lower quarterly stocks of rice and wheat, which was at the lowest in three years, **b)** uncertainty about the upcoming monsoon season and its potential impact on food grain production, **c)** concerns over state-level food schemes which rely on the central government and FCI to support such schemes without considering broader trends and realities.

What are the lessons for states from this event?

States must have comprehensive plans and mechanisms in place before launching any large-scale scheme.

The states must consider the macro picture to ascertain the practicality of their new schemes, in the light of national food security and financial implications.

It also underscores the need for states to consider all aspects before making promises that rely heavily on central support.

Political parties should exercise restraint while making electoral promises, especially on critical issues like food security.

13. If the consumption of tobacco is not okay, India should just ban it

Source: The post is based on the article “**If the consumption of tobacco is not okay, India should just ban it**” published in “**Live mint**” on 5th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues related to health

News: India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare plans to enforce additional anti-tobacco controls on Online Curated Content Providers (OCCPs)

What are Online Curated Content Providers (OCCPs)?

OCCPs are platforms that deliver digitally streamed entertainment content over the internet. These platforms include popular streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+. OCCPs typically offer a wide range of content, including movies, TV series, documentaries, and other forms of entertainment, which they curate or organize based on the user's preferences,

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viewing history, or specific categories. OCCPs are different from other online platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, etc., which provide user-generated content.

What is the government plan to enforce more anti-tobacco regulations on OCCPs?

As per these guidelines, the OCCPs will be required to display textual warnings on the harmful effects of tobacco use when scenes involving such products are shown.

The OCCPs have been given 90 days to comply and adopt a technical solution to this. Additionally, the warnings must be displayed in the language of the audio track of the content, which means OCCPs may need to translate the warnings into multiple languages.

The content providers are also expected to review their existing libraries manually to identify all instances of tobacco use. This implies a significant task of viewing and marking the relevant sections in their vast content libraries.

The onus of implementing these changes and adhering to the new guidelines will be primarily on the content owners, with OCCPs offering the required technical solutions. This could lead to substantial content going offline if it's impractical for OCCPs or content owners to comply with these new regulations.

What are the challenges in implementing this plan?

Multi-language compliance: The requirement to display warnings in the language of the audio track can lead to logistical and financial burdens, as it necessitates translating warnings into multiple languages.

Manual review requirement: Manually identifying content containing the use of tobacco products could take millions of hours, as it cannot be accomplished solely by automated technology. This diverts significant resources from content creation to compliance efforts.

Burden on small providers: Smaller streaming platforms might find it especially difficult to comply with these new guidelines. It might stifle innovation and foster an unequal playing field.

Potential content loss: If content owners refuse or fail to comply with these guidelines, OCCPs may need to remove the non-compliant content, leading to a significant loss of content available for consumers.

Impact on International Content: It could deter international content creators from including tobacco warnings in their work, limiting the availability of popular international titles in India.

What should be done?

Re-evaluation of guidelines: The government should avoid unnecessarily burdensome requirements. The focus should be on measures that are practical, efficient, and not overly disruptive to the industry.

Learning from global practices: Countries like Singapore, Australia, and the EU have managed to create regulations that balance public health concerns with industry growth. India can gain valuable insights from these models.

Comprehensive public health campaigns: Instead of placing the entire burden on OCCPs, the government could invest in comprehensive public health campaigns addressing the root causes of tobacco consumption, such as stress and peer pressure.

Inclusive policy framework: Regulations should be created in consultation with industry stakeholders to ensure they are inclusive and consider the operational realities of OCCPs. This will ensure a more effective and fair policy framework.

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14. [Antibiotics with promise — a lifeline India awaits](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Antibiotics with promise — a lifeline India awaits**” published in **The Hindu** on **5th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2-Issues related to health

News-The article emphasizes the need for [Emergency Use Authorisation \(EUA\)](#) for essential antibiotics that can make a profound difference between life and death.

What are the challenges posed by Antibiotic resistance?

Infection specialists, intensivists, oncologists, and doctors treating severe infections in critically ill and immunocompromised patients are facing challenges.

Each year, **millions of lives are lost due to the lack** of available antibiotics in the face of these formidable pathogens.

The relentless march of drug resistance has rendered **once-effective treatments ineffective**.

Doctors are left with **limited choices** and often resort to **suboptimal treatments** that may have **significant side effects** or offer little hope of a cure.

It adds to the **immense pressure and helplessness experienced by doctors** on the front lines.

What is the way forward?

India must extend the COVID **level of urgency as in granting EUA for** to saving the lives of patients who may otherwise succumb to infections resistant to all currently available antibiotics.

Cefiderocol, a licenced antibiotic in several countries, developed by a **Japanese company**, has demonstrated excellent efficacy against drug-resistant infections. **India demands access** to this life-saving antibiotic without delay.

However, we must emphasise the importance of **responsible and appropriate utilisation** of these medications.

A **collective decision by a team of experienced doctors**, including infectious diseases experts should be made mandatory before initiating their use.

By **granting EUA for cefepime/zidebactam**, an Indian innovation, and **cefiderocol**, a globally recognized antibiotic, we can strengthen our arsenal against drug-resistant infections.

As a nation known for its scientific achievements, we can **make a substantial impact** on the world stage.

15. [Let Them Think – on education system of India](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Let Them Think**”, published in The Times of India on 5th July, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Issues related to Education system in India

News: Recently, 550 academics have criticized the move of Indian Institute of Science (IISc) to cancel a discussion on UAPA, prisons and the criminal justice system.

What the move of IISc has been criticized for being against NEP’s objective?

The National Education Policy 2020 aims to transform the educational system from a content-focused, rote-learning model to one that develops the advanced cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving. The policy encourages addressing creativity challenges through an interdisciplinary approach.

IISc is the top institution in GOI’s national rankings in its categories. The decision to cancel the discussion highlights that an institute of high standard is also not following the approach of

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NEP. It indicates that the Indian education system may not have fully grasped the NEP's message.

The development of creativity cannot be achieved by limiting students to a strict curriculum and discouraging any activities that might provoke questioning. Protecting students from real-world issues will be counterproductive in enhancing their cognitive abilities.

Therefore, any attempt by an institution to prevent students from exploring diverse perspectives on UAPA and its role in the criminal justice system is a significant disservice to them.

16. Thwarting Twitter – on Karnataka HC judgment against Twitter

Source: This post is based on the article “**Let Them Think**”, published in The Times of India on 5th July, 2023.

Syllabus topic: GS Paper 2, Government Policies for various sectors

News: The article discusses the recent rejection by the Karnataka High Court of a petition by Twitter, Inc., which challenged the validity of the Union government's blocking orders.

Read More about the case– [A case of unchecked power to restrict e-free speech](#)

The court ruled that Twitter, as a foreign entity, could not invoke the constitutional guarantee of free speech and expression on behalf of its users.

It also imposed a fine of ₹50 lakh on Twitter for indulging in “speculative litigation” despite not complying with the blocking orders for a long period.

Court refused to entertain all arguments based on:

- The absence of notice to users and
- Lack of proportionality involved in large-scale suspension of accounts and posts on few topics.

What are the issues reported by the author with the judgment?

The court's decision will potentially encourage account-level blocking rather than the removal of specific tweets, links, or URLs deemed harmful to public order or national security.

It will have significant implications for freedom of speech and expression in India, particularly in the context of social media platforms.

It also raises questions about the rights and obligations of large media companies in relation to user-generated content. A definitive verdict from the Supreme Court may be needed to clarify these issues.

What should be done?

Laws in most countries allow intermediaries such as social media platforms and Internet service providers to remove any offending content.

Democracies should formulate policies and regulations rooted in fairness and natural justice.

Government should avoid imposing undue restrictions on freedom of speech and expression.

In Shreya Singhal case (2015), Section 69A of the IT Act was upheld by the Supreme Court, because, the section provides adequate procedural safeguards.

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17. Potential gains – Govt is encouraging use of farm waste

Source: The post is based on the article “**Potential gains – Govt is encouraging use of farm waste**” published in **Business Standard** on **6th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.**

Relevance: **About the policy changes and new guidelines for crop-residue management.**

News: Recently, the agriculture ministry has introduced new guidelines for crop-residue management.

About the New Guidelines

The primary aim of the new guidelines is to promote economic uses of farm waste. It makes farm waste a source of income for farmers, rather than burning it as useless refuse.

For this, rural bodies like farmers’ producer organizations, cooperative societies, village panchayats, and private entrepreneurs will be collecting biomass from fields. Then, they will supply it to entrepreneurs engaged in producing various utility items from it.

The government will provide financial assistance in the form of 65% of the project cost, along with subsidies on machinery and equipment.

Assistance will be provided through the **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the Agriculture Infrastructure Development Fund (AIDF).**

Moreover, amendments have also been made to the existing [biomass co-firing policy](#).

What amendments have been made in biomass co-firing policy?

Along with a new set of guidelines, **policy amendments have been made which include improving the norms for co-firing thermal power plants with pellets made of biomass.**

The amended policy provides for benchmarking the prices of pellets, with the expectation that power units will establish sustainable biomass-supply chains.

Implementation of these measures can reduce the reliance on environmentally unfriendly fossil fuels in power generation.

These are consistent with a global trend of incentivizing the use of biomass as a feedstock for energy production and as part of measures to reduce economic development’s carbon footprint and combat climate change.

Why were these amendments and guidelines required?

It will **address the issue of crop residue burning**, which causes severe air pollution in the National Capital Region (NCR) during October-November every year.

As per official estimates, switching from coal to biomass in thermal power units can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 38 million tones.

However, **challenges exist due to the lack of infrastructure and resources for collecting, transporting, and processing biomass and farm waste.**

Although the Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022 mandates all thermal-power units to use renewable fuel as part of their feedstock, compliance with this provision is inadequate.

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18. Who Will Be The +1 In China+1?

Source– The post is based on the article “Who Will Be The +1 In China+1?” published in “The Times of India” on **6th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and China bilateral relationship

News- Rising tensions between the United States and China has brought the race among nations to become the +1 in the China+1 contest where India has many advantages over Southeast Asian countries.

What are the factors that are in favor of India?

First, it has by far the largest workforce. The **UN Population Division** estimates that working age population in India stood at **950. 2 million in 2021**.

Second, India has **lower wage** rate because of the much larger workforce and the lower per-capita income. It because India’s 45% of the workforce is still in agriculture and its working age population is expected to grow more compared to Southeast Asia.

Third, India is **internally a single market**. It means there are no barriers to the movement of goods and services within. Whereas, Southeast Asia is even though connected by free trade area (FTA) agreement, the goods can only cross borders, once they **satisfy the rules of origin** criterion.

Fourth, India’s internal market is large. India’s GDP at **\$3. 4 trillion in 2022** is already significantly larger than \$3 trillion of Southeast Asia minus Singapore which is in Southeast Asia but not a competing China+1 location.

What are the challenges in front of India?

One major concern is that the **countries in Southeast Asia** are already members of the Regional and Comprehensive Economic Partnership (**RCEP**). **Therefore, supply chains of SE Asia with China are already well established. It is a major** advantage for them. Malaysia and Thailand are also members of the Comprehensive Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (**CPTPP**), which accounts for **one-sixth of the world GDP**.

India is not a member of either of the agreement and has limited engagement with Asian countries.

Upgradation of “Look East” policy to “Act East” would not be fruitful due to deterioration of relationship with China.

However, India should consider strengthening it’s relations with rest of Asia.

How can India strengthen its relations with Asian countries?

Thus, **two main avenues** to deepening the engagement with Asia are **strengthening the existing FTA** with the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean)** and **seeking the membership of CPTPP**.

Joining **CPTPP with a 20-year implementation period** negotiated as a part of the deal has a potential to make India a developed country by 2047.

Simultaneously, **gaining duty-free access to this large market** is bound to make us the number one China+1 destination.

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[19. Online education is inadequate for reasons we have long known](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Online education is inadequate for reasons we have long known**” published the **minton 6th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2-Issues related to Education

Relevance: Online Education

News- Online education is unable to address core requirements of good education and that is why it has very limited effectiveness.

What are the limitations of online education?

The answers lie at the very core of **what education is and how learning happens**.

Education is about developing **three kinds of things** in the learner which are **Capacities (reading, critical thinking,)**, **Values and dispositions (Like empathy, non-discrimination) and Knowledge**.

Online Education does not **develop values and fundamental capacities** but focuses on goals linked with knowledge.

Education provides 2 kinds of goals: 1) Know-How 2) Know-what

Know-what tells us the concepts and content knowledge, while **Know-how** provides the knowledge of how to do things.

Good education is often about **developing know-how and not only the know-what**. It is because an infinite amount of content is available, but if a student knows how to do things, he will automatically grab know-whats of the thing.

While know-what can be understood without a teacher, know-how is much more difficult to understand and requires a teacher. Online education is unable to cover the know-how system properly.

Why is the teacher unable to provide effective education online?

Attention and focus: In education, it's about sustained attention which is lacking in online education.

Emotional state: Being excited, bored, or sad has a direct effect on learning.

Motivation: The learner's desire is affected by a complex range of things in the **learner's immediate environment and life**.

To ensure learning, the teacher must **orchestrate attention and perseverance**, understand and **manage emotions and motivation**. But this cannot be done online.

Further, **different learners learn different things** more effectively by listening, talking, doing, seeing and experiencing.

It's about discussion, questioning, arguing, etc., and all this evolves organically in a group of students with a teacher. This again is **nearly impossible online**.

[20. How India can leverage its biggest strength](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**How India can leverage its biggest strength**” published in “The Indian Express” on 6th July 2023.

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

News: India's present demographic scenario is extremely favorable, with an average age of 29 years. This youthful population sets India apart from other populous nations and presents a unique advantage for the country's economic growth.

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What is the present demographic scenario in India and around the world?

India's demographic advantage: India's present demographic scenario is extremely favourable, with an average age of 29 years. This youthful population sets India apart from other populous nations and presents a unique advantage for the country's economic growth.

The aging global scenario: Contrarily, the global scenario is characterized by aging populations, especially in developed countries. For instance, the average ages in the US, China, France, Germany, and Japan are significantly higher, ranging from 38 to 48 years. Moreover, these nations are expected to witness higher old-age dependency ratios by 2075, with Japan at 75.3%, France at 55.8%, the US at 49.3%, the UK at 53%, and Germany at 63.1%.

India's golden opportunity: Given these circumstances, the next 25 years could be the golden era for India, leveraging its youthful workforce to drive economic growth and progress.

What are lessons from Asia's Growth Stories?

Asia's economic triumphs: Asian countries like China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore serve as ideal examples of leveraging demographic dividends. Notably, China, with an almost 10% annual growth rate over four decades, transformed its economy through labour-intensive manufacturing.

Key strategies: These nations strategically moved their labour force from agriculture to manufacturing and services, resulting in consistent growth and reduced old-age dependency. This shift was backed by structural transformations, including infrastructural development, labour law reforms, and trade facilitation measures.

Implication for India: These growth stories underline the necessity for India to focus on similar transformative strategies, especially in labour-intensive manufacturing sectors, to fully capitalize on its favourable demographics.

What are the Indian government's initiatives to reap the demographic dividend in India?

Skill development initiatives: The government has launched programmes like **Jan Shikshan Sansthan**, **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana**, and **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme** to improve employability through skilling, re-skilling, and up-skilling. These initiatives aim to make the Indian labour force more productive and efficient. The MSDE Vision 2025 further aims to improve the linkage between education and skill.

Healthcare reforms: The Ayushman Bharat and Swachh Bharat Mission seek to improve health equity in India. The **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana** aims to make drug prices affordable and accessible, enhancing overall public health.

Education policy: The National Education Policy 2020, alongside **the Samagra Shiksha programme**, is focused on providing inclusive, equitable, and quality education at all school levels, ensuring a productive labour force in the future.

Support for MSMEs: Recognizing MSMEs as the backbone of Indian manufacturing, the government has endeavoured to support them in improving competitiveness, achieving scale, digital infrastructure, technology upgrades, and branding.

Flagship programmes: The government has introduced flagship programmes like Skill India, Make in India, and Start-up India to enhance the productivity of the labour force and to foster innovation and entrepreneurship.

What should be done?

India's young demographic offers a unique advantage for economic growth. However, capitalizing on this opportunity requires several strategies: transitioning the labour force from agriculture to manufacturing and services, bolstering MSMEs, enhancing skilling programs, and improving health and education services. These steps, combined with accelerated policy

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reforms and effective execution of initiatives like Skill India, Make in India, and Start-up India, will enable India to fully harness its demographic dividend.

21. [India's shield of privacy should reflect Article 21](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“India’s shield of privacy should reflect Article 21”** published in **Live Mint** on **7th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.**

Relevance: **About new** Digital Personal Data Protection Bill and associated concerns.

News: The monsoon session of the Parliament is likely to take up the new Digital Personal Data Protection Bill.

About the New Digital Personal Data Protection Bill

Read Here: [New Digital Personal Data Protection Bill in Monsoon Session](#) and [Cabinet gives nod to Data Protection Bill](#)

What are the concerns with the New Digital Personal Data Protection Bill?

There are concerns over privacy due to the “deemed consent” clause in the Bill. The clause has been designed for emergency data access, however, there are also threats of the clause being misused by the authorities.

This is evident from the fact when the government attempted to break chat encryption for the sake of public security, raising suspicions over the privacy and potential of misuse by the government.

Hence, it is crucial to address the flaws in the bill to align it with its original purpose as defined by the judiciary. Else, privacy as a fundamental right would be weakened.

Read More: [Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022: Benefits and Concerns – Explained](#)

How can privacy as a fundamental right can be effectively implemented?

A [Supreme Court ruling](#) in 2017 recognized privacy as a fundamental right under **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) of the Indian Constitution.**

However, **basic rights hold value only if they are upheld against all forces, including the state.** This also requires unbiased judicial procedures.

Therefore, privacy, as a key aspect of liberty, can be protected when no one is arbitrary arrested and unnecessary spying on individual also comes to an end.

Moreover, given the increasing digital realm, **it is also crucial that individuals should be owner of their data by law.**

They should be given rights to decide over sharing their data, and only necessary information should be made available to the state.

Further, given the alleged use of spyware like Pegasus, clear limits on intrusion by state agencies are also essential. **Properly issued e-search permits may serve** the purpose.

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[22. Express View on CPR losing its tax exemptions: Think tanked](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on CPR losing its tax exemptions: Think tanked**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **concerns associated with the** Centre for Policy Research (CPR)

News: The Centre for Policy Research (CPR), a prominent think tank has faced scrutiny from state agencies.

What steps has the government taken against the CPR?

A few months ago, the Ministry of Home Affairs cancelled CPR’s FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) registration. Now, **the Income Tax department has cancelled CPR’s tax exemption status, which it has held since 1976.**

These decisions have been taken after a show cause notice was issued by the IT department in December last year. **The notice stated that CPR was engaging in activities that were not in line with its registered objectives and conditions.**

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

What were the activities CPR was involved in?

In September last year, the IT department conducted surveys on the CPR regarding alleged tax discrepancies.

The IT department identified certain violations, **including CPR’s involvement in the Hasdeo movement against coal mining in Chhattisgarh forests.**

The investigation team of the IT department **has also red-flagged funds provided by CPR to Jana Abhivyaakti Samajik Vikas Sanstha,** an organisation involved in the preservation of the environment.

The IT department claimed that funds were used to address issues related to litigation, mobilization of people, and funding for the Hasdeo movement, **which falls outside CPR’s stated mandate.**

What can be the implication of the measures taken by the government against CPR?

The CPR has worked on areas from analysing election data to evaluating the government’s flagship programmes such as PM Poshan.

This researched analysis contributes to policy debates and helps both state and non-state agencies to improve their decision-making processes.

Further, it is also difficult to expect the state planning boards or Niti Aayog to fill this task of both making and auditing public policy as well as do broad analysis of political and social trends.

Hence, **many governments rely on think tanks to build capacities in decision-making. These think tanks in turn rely on donors.**

Hence, **disrupting the flow of funds to think tanks can severely** impact their activities, potentially leading to their closure.

What can be the way ahead?

While CPR needs to address questions raised by the tax authorities, **cancelling its tax exemption status, which is a key to its funding, is seen as an example of excessive regulation.**

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It also raises concerns about returning to the era of the license permit inspector raj.

Further, tax inspectors may succeed in forcing institutions to conform with the government's goals and priorities. However, this approach will hurt policymaking and restrict the range of ideas that policymakers may discuss and debate.

23. [India's strategic choices](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India's strategic choices**” published in “Business Standard” on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: Syllabus: GS 2- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests & GS 3- Science and Technology- indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

News: the article talks about the issues associated with the outcomes of recent PM's visit to Foreign Countries.

Why are the possible issues arising from recent deals?

prepares for another visit to Paris, there are speculations about a potential partnership with French engine-maker Safran to design and develop an engine for India's futuristic, fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). However, this could stir controversy as the British firm, Rolls-Royce, has also offered to partner with the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) for the same project.

Prior Commitment to US-Made Engines: The Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD) has already committed to using US-made General Electric (GE) engines for the Tejas fighter. This existing commitment adds another layer of complexity to the situation. If India now enters into a major agreement with Safran for the AMCA project, it might raise questions about the coherence of India's defense procurement strategy.

Strategic Implications: The AMCA project has immense strategic importance for India, as it is expected to be a crucial component of the Indian Air Force's fifth-generation fighter fleet. Thus, any controversy surrounding its development could cast a shadow on the broader procurement process and strategy of India's defense sector.

What are the India's limitations in co-developing defence equipment with US?

Capability differential: The primary constraint in US-India high technology cooperation has been the disparity in technological capabilities. Historically, the Indian side has had a more limited range of high-tech offerings compared to the advanced technology available in the US.

Limited co-development experience: India's limitations in co-developing defence equipment have been an obstacle. Past collaborations have revealed challenges related to technical expertise, manufacturing capabilities, and infrastructure, which have constrained the depth of cooperation.

India has a long history of space collaboration with Russia. Indian scientists were traditionally trained in Russia, and the country played a significant role in India's first astronaut mission in 1984. This historical connection with Russia in the space domain could potentially impact the dynamics of space collaboration between India and the US, as India's past association with Russia might influence its approach to collaborations with other countries, including the US.

What can we conclude from the recent developments?

India's Prime Minister international engagements reflect India's balancing act in maintaining diverse alliances. The India-US relationship is improving with new initiatives, notably in high-tech cooperation and space. Despite this, India's historic ties with Russia and its commitment to multiple vendors in defence deals, such as Safran and GE, highlight potential complexities.

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Additionally, the lack of consensus at the SCO meeting signifies geopolitical constraints. However, through careful diplomacy, India aims to solidify its place in the international landscape by strengthening relationships and pursuing strategic partnerships.

24. Limits of expansion – on Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)

Source: The post is based on the article “Limits of expansion” published in “The Hindu ” on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Government policies and intervention & GS 3 – issue related to poverty and hunger

News: The National Conference of Food Ministers failed to resolve the issue of the discontinuance of rice and wheat sales to States under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) in view of the Centre’s restrictions.

Read – [Lessons from the fracas over foodgrains](#)

What was the aim of The National Conference of Food Ministers?

The aim was to discuss important topics such as creating an action plan for the procurement of coarse grains and placing a strengthened focus on food and nutritional security.

Why has this issue arisen?

The issue arises because **a)** the state government launched a large-scale scheme without having a comprehensive plan and mechanism in place, **b)** The Union Food Ministry halted the sale of surplus grain under the open market sale scheme, affecting the state’s plan to use OMSS to implement their scheme.

What are the lessons for the state from this issue?

Reduced dependency on the Centre for State schemes: States should not overly rely on the Centre or its agencies for implementing state-specific food sector schemes. This is underscored by the Food Corporation of India’s withdrawal from providing additional foodgrains for the Anna Bhagya 2.0 programme in Karnataka.

Resource identification and cost-effectiveness: States need to identify their own resources and implement food security schemes in a cost-effective manner. As demonstrated by the situation in Karnataka, finding an equivalent supplier at a feasible cost can be a challenge.

Feasibility of expanding entitlements: States should consider the feasibility of expanding entitlements, such as increasing the amount of foodgrain provided from 5 kg to 10 kg, considering their own resource constraints.

Advance planning: The states should undertake careful and advanced planning for their food security schemes. The situation in Karnataka brings into focus the pitfalls of ill-planned attempts to replicate Union government schemes without considering the states’ individual resources and contexts.

What should be done?

With potential El Niño impacts on foodgrain production and procurement on the horizon, the Centre and the states are urged to concentrate on strengthening the Public Distribution System. Instead of trying to expand existing schemes, the focus should be on making current systems more foolproof and efficient.

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25. India needs a Uniform Civil Code

Source: The post is based on the article “**India needs a Uniform Civil Code**” published in “The Hindu ” on 7th July 2023.

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

What is UCC?

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is a proposed law in India that aims to replace personal laws based on scriptures and customs of each religious community with a common set of rules governing every citizen. It seeks to ensure equal justice and rights for all citizens by establishing common rules for issues like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption, regardless of religion.

What are the constitutional debates on UCC?

The UCC has a deep-rooted history in the Constitution of India and its creation. Notably, discussions during the Constituent Assembly debates highlight the significance and need for a UCC.

Babasaheb Ambedkar, the primary architect of the Indian Constitution, strongly supported the UCC. He believed it was key to achieving gender equality and eliminating social issues. He voiced his confusion over why religion has been allowed to create barriers in the way of legal and social reform.

Several other notable figures like Alladi **Krishnaswamy Ayyar** and **K.M. Munshi** also expressed their support for UCC. They stressed that a UCC was needed to unify and secularize the nation’s way of life.

Despite the support, the Assembly did not reach a consensus, and the UCC ended up in **Article 44 of the Directive Principles**, making it a constitutional obligation for the state to implement it.

What is Supreme Court’s Stand on UCC?

India’s Supreme Court has also voiced its opinion on the matter. In the **Shah Bano case**, it regretfully remarked on the failure to bring Article 44 to life and expressed that a UCC would foster national integration. In the **Indian Young Lawyers Association case (2018)**, the court ruled that religious freedom should align with the Constitution’s fundamental rights. Despite its views, the court refrained from issuing directives to the government, respecting the parliament’s legislative domain.

What is the significance of UCC?

Reduces social inequalities and discrimination: A UCC would safeguard fundamental rights, decrease social disparities, and curb gender discrimination. It represents a unified legal system that upholds constitutional principles, serving as a mechanism for promoting equality and justice for all citizens.

Promotes gender equality: The UCC is critical for empowering women and establishing gender parity in matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. It would help abolish practices that deny women their rights and provide them with equal opportunities and protections.

Encourages national integration: The implementation of a UCC will help cultivate a sense of unity among India’s diverse communities, fostering social cohesion and national integration. It is a significant step toward building a new, inclusive, and egalitarian India.

Conclusion

The call for the UCC is a call for social reform, a code aligned with the principles of justice, equality, and an inclusive society. Thus, it’s crucial for citizens, religious leaders, and political parties to support its implementation, as it would represent a significant step toward a more

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equal and fair society.

26. [Express View on data protection Bill: Personal is private](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on data protection Bill: Personal is private**” published in “Indian Express” on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Government policies and interventions for various sectors

News: The Union cabinet has approved the draft data protection Bill, which is set to be introduced in Parliament in the upcoming monsoon session.

This Digital Personal Data Protection Bill is a crucial part of the regulatory framework being introduced to govern India’s rapidly expanding digital economy.

Read – [draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill](#)

What are the implications of Digital Personal Data Protection Bill?

The Bill may empower the central government to exempt any government agency from its purview.

The government may have the discretion to appoint members to the data protection board. It raises concern about the independence and autonomy of institutions. The board will be charged with ensuring compliance and dealing with grievances and disputes.

The legislation is likely to have shifted towards a blacklisting framework from a whitelisting approach for dealing with cross-border data flows. The shift towards a blacklisting framework for cross-border data flows could be influenced by the prevailing geopolitical environment.

The Bill prescribes penalties up to Rs 250 crore per instance, for failing to prevent a data breach. However, the word ‘per instance’ is not defined yet.

27. [Our national surveys are based on faulty sampling](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Our national surveys are based on faulty sampling**” published in “Indian Express” on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Government policies and interventions for various sectors

News: The article discusses the importance of data quality in surveys that inform policy decisions in India.

Policymakers in India typically rely on sample surveys of households to assess previous policies or to frame new ones.

However, the data quality related to the National Sample Survey (NSS), National Family Health Survey (NFHS), and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is inadequate due to outdated sampling frames and archaic survey mechanisms.

What are the Issues associated with the present surveys?

Surveys use outdated sampling frames and hence, are not representative

The surveys are said to grossly and systematically underestimate India’s progress and development, leading to misleading estimates.

For example, nearly all major surveys in India conducted post-2011 have overestimated the proportion of the rural population significantly. They have relied on 2011 for the sampling frame.

There is also a problem with the response rate, which is systematically correlated with wealth levels. The response rate falls with growth in income and wealth of households. No adjustment has been made for this error in the surveys.

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If the policies are framed based on these estimates, they are not going to yield the desired results. This will result in a continuous gap between ground realities and survey estimates.

What should be done?

Statistical reforms should not merely focus on the availability, frequency, and largeness of data, but greater emphasis should be placed on data quality.

28. The infinite variety of custom – on UCC and Tribals debate

Source– The post is based on the article “The infinite variety of custom” published in “The Hindu” on 8th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance– UCC

News- The Prime Minister’s push for a uniform civil code has led to alarm among tribal communities in different regions of the country.

What are the concerns of tribals regarding UCC?

Tribal fear that significant parts of their way of life would be undone if a UCC is implemented. Tribal feel that “**one code for one country**” undermines the Constitution.

Most tribes have a **patrilineal line of succession**. They fear that non-tribal people and people of other religions can trap their women to grab land if daughters are allowed to claim father property.

Tribal fears that UCC will impact their **customary practices**. They also believe that civil courts are too **cumbersome and inaccessible**.

Special legislation such as the PESA Act, 1996; the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908; and the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act, 1876, recognise customary practices in Jharkhand. These are protected under the **Fifth Schedule of the Constitution**.

There are also **judicial precedents** which recognise **customary practices** and authorise lower courts to make decisions on their basis.

The sharpest protests against a UCC in the north-east emerged from Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram.

Many tribal bodies have said that UCC is **unconstitutional** because of protections provided in **Articles 371A and 371G** of the Constitution of India.

A UCC could also come in conflict with the **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution**.

Social practices in the north-east vary from community to community. They fears that their **traditional system** will be affected by a common code

PESA Act, 1996 empowers the tribal villages to use their “customary mode of dispute resolution” for disputes related to land, family, and marriage, among others. The **community-based systems of settling disputes** in Arunachal Pradesh are “more democratic” than those of modern-day courts. The tribal communities fear that the UCC could undermine this Act.

Adi community in Arunachal Pradesh have Kebang system for settling disputes. Unlike the formal judicial system, everyone’s a winner in the Kebang system.

In Meghalaya, daughters inherit **ancestral property** from their parents. The Khasi customary law vests the **right of inheritance** on the youngest daughter.

The **best practices and aspects of customary laws** can be accommodated when a **common code** is prepared without affecting **traditional systems**.

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Change cannot be **imposed** on communities. They will change when they feel the need to.

29. [Choice is theirs: BCCI puts unfair restrictions on men cricketers](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Choice is theirs: BCCI puts unfair restrictions on men cricketers**” published in the “**The Times of India**” on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance- Issues related to sports administration

News- The article explains the issue of male players regarding BCCI restrictions on their overseas business

What are the concerns of male cricketers?

Women cricketers can do business overseas without **jeopardising their career**. Their male counterparts are denied that right. Male cricketers must retire from all forms of domestic cricket to get that opportunity. This is unfair.

Media reports indicate that the BCCI is thinking about **cooling off periods** for retired players before they look for overseas opportunities. Cooling off makes sense in **sensitive areas such as the military or government** to prevent **conflicts of interest**. But it is not the case with cricket.

What is the way forward for better career prospects for male cricketers?

England and Australia allow their players to find the **balance between club contacts and national duty**. It's a **realistic approach**. **Peak earning potential** for a cricketer is limited to a few years.

BCCI should take a **pragmatic approach** and leave it to active players to decide about their business contracts.

30. [China's loss of momentum, rebuilding a bridge too far](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**China's loss of momentum, rebuilding a bridge too far**” published in “**The Business Standard**” on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus GS2- International Relations

News- The Chinese economy is presenting a strange picture.

How is the Chinese economy showing a different trend from other economies of the world?

Much of the world is facing inflation. But, Beijing faces deflation in producer prices and low consumer price inflation.

Central banks in other countries have been increasing interest rates. But, the Chinese are easing **up on monetary policy**.

There is a **stock-market boom in countries like India**. **But**, the Shanghai Composite index is lower than it was in 2009.

Growth in last year was expected to be **5.5 per cent**, but fell short at **3 per cent**. This year's official growth target is 5 per cent. But the outlook for growth is uncertain due to the lack of domestic demand and of private investment.

Industrial production is lower than the pre-Covid level four years earlier. **Exports** and Imports are down.

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What are the factors behind the recent slowdown in the Chinese economy?

Some of these are cyclical issues. But, there are **structural constraints**. These are a shrinking population in the working-age bracket, massive public and quasi-public debt, over-construction in housing, shortage of consumer demand and poor project choices.

China has **shifted from capital investment to private consumption** as the primary driver of growth. But, it has failed to achieve growth aims.

Western world is **de-risking itself** by reducing its dependence on Chinese manufacturing. Any **meaningful de-coupling** is not possible. But, more foreign investment will be headed to other countries as a result of **di-risking moves** by the west.

What assumptions can be from these developments about the global political economy?

Earlier assumptions were that China would become larger than the US as an economy, and challenge Western strategic dominance. It may **need to be revised**.

It is a **rebalancing of global power**, rather than a substantial power shift.

[31. Ten military lessons from the Ukraine conflict for India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Ten military lessons from the Ukraine conflict for India**” published in “Indian Express” on 8th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interest.

What are the military lessons from the Ukraine conflict for India?

The military lessons from the Ukraine conflict for India are;

Geopolitical conflicts can be inherently escalatory and high-stakes: Studying the Russia-Ukraine conflict reminds us that geopolitical tensions can quickly escalate and have severe consequences for regional stability and alliances, such as NATO.

Prolonged wars involve evolving aims: Long-lasting wars tend to escalate and can surprise even seasoned military analysts with their evolution, such as Russia’s continued resistance against Ukraine.

A stable domestic front is crucial for prolonged wars: Wars demand not only battlefield strategy but also political stability and domestic resilience, which are intertwined.

Battlefield and political resilience are interconnected: Just like Russia, India should ensure its military and political strategies are coherent and adaptable, even in the face of setbacks.

Prolonged wars are wars of reserves: These types of wars need extensive reserves – including political will, military capacity, industrial logistics, and manpower. A consistent narrative can also bolster morale.

War strategies are complex and evolving: The Ukraine conflict shows that warfare blends tactics from different eras, demonstrating that India should be prepared to adapt and learn from both past and present military strategies.

The rise of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) tools changes the battlefield: ISR technologies reveal more of the battlefield than ever before, making traditional stealth tactics less effective. India must consider the potential of these technologies, including their capacity to shorten engagement windows and blur the lines between combatants and non-combatants.

The democratization of combat information calls for decentralized firepower: As combat information becomes widely accessible, there will be pressure to distribute firepower more

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broadly, potentially to smaller units like platoons. This means India needs to prepare for simultaneous, multi-location engagements and develop new command structures to manage dispersed forces.

Modern technology impacts the dynamics of the battlefield: Beyond Visual Range (BVR) capabilities and other technology-rich strategies are becoming increasingly lethal. This suggests that India must keep pace with technological advancements and find a balance between precision and volume firepower, especially as sensor and strike capabilities converge.

Military technology must align with national doctrine: India should adapt technology to suit its own military doctrine, rather than subscribing to a one-size-fits-all approach.

India should learn from global military trends: India needs to independently evaluate its military strategy by learning, unlearning, and relearning lessons from past wars and current global trends. This will ensure strategic autonomy and aid in defense reform processes.

32. Sobriety after the euphoria of the U.S. state visit

Source: The post is based on the article “**Sobriety after the euphoria of the U.S. state visit**” published in “The Hindu” on 8th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

About historical development of India US relations

In the past, U.S.-India relations have seen their share of disappointments, notably during the tenures of U.S. Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon. Johnson denied aid to India during the 1962 China-India conflict, and Nixon made a show of force during the 1971 India-Pakistan conflict, causing strain in the relationship.

However, the recent state visit by Indian PM to the U.S. marks a significant shift in this relationship. The U.S. demonstrated its clear support for India, promising technology transfer in critical areas like fighter jet engines production and other emerging technologies. This can significantly boost India’s military and aerospace capabilities.

What are the major differences in India’s previous visits then and now?

Earlier Visits: Visits by early Indian Prime Ministers, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, were foundational, setting the groundwork for future relations. Some visits faced challenges, like Indira Gandhi’s, which was considered a disaster due to disagreements between both nations.

Rajiv Gandhi’s visit: Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to the U.S. was considered successful and it broke many past barriers in Indo-U.S. relations.

Manmohan Singh’s visit (2005): During Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s visit in 2005, India achieved a civil nuclear cooperation between India and the U.S.

The most recent visit by Prime Minister Modi witnessed significant advancements in defense and technology collaborations, showcasing the enhanced position of India as a prime defense technological partner of the U.S.

How the civil nuclear deal marked a shift in India- us relationship?

The civil nuclear deal was a significant milestone in the India-US relationship for several reasons:

Waiver and approvals: The U.S. helped India secure a waiver under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and approval of the U.S. Congress for the 123 Agreement, enabling India to reach an India-specific Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). These were exceptional achievements that had few parallels in global history.

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India's unique position: As a result of this deal, India has the ability to keep some reactors outside IAEA safeguards, allowing them to be utilized for military purposes. This unprecedented freedom reflects a remarkable shift in India's global standing.

In essence, the civil nuclear deal marked a shift in the India-US relationship by elevating it to a level of strategic cooperation, mutual respect, and global significance that was unprecedented.

Why India should be cautious?

History of changing alliances: The U.S. has been known to change its priorities and allies based on its strategic interests, often influenced by the preferences of its current President. This dynamic and unpredictable nature of U.S. foreign policy makes it important for India to remain cautious and not overly reliant.

Circumstance vs conviction: The present positive shift in U.S.-India relations appears to be more driven by changing global circumstances, such as the rise of China, rather than an inherent shift in U.S. perceptions about India. It's important to remember that circumstances can change.

Differences in alliances: India is not currently the kind of ally that the U.S. typically seeks. For example, India wouldn't be able to be part of an arrangement like the AUKUS Pact, which involves deep strategic commitments between the U.S., the UK, and Australia. The fundamentals underlying the Quad (comprising India, Japan, Australia, and the U.S.) and AUKUS are quite different.

Potential as a 'Bridge Power': India has the potential to act as a 'bridge power', mediating between conflicting parties in the Indo-Pacific, West Asia, and Europe. India should seize this opportunity to assert its position on the global stage, instead of being overly influenced by any one power.

33. Ominous signs- on Khalistani separatism

Source: The post is based on the article "**Ominous signs**" published in "The Hindu" on 8th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Internal security

News: On July 8, rallies by pro-Khalistan separatists are planned in the U.S., the U.K., Canada and Australia that target Indian diplomatic missions and diplomats. The Indian government has taken steps to speak to officials in these countries for added security and vigilance.

What is the current situation regarding pro-Khalistan rallies?

There is an increase in pro-Khalistan separatist activities targeting Indian diplomatic missions and diplomats in the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and Australia. This includes planned rallies marked as "Kill India" and "Khalistan Freedom". These activities have left the Indian government worried and has led them to take steps such as speaking to officials in these countries for increased security.

How have the foreign governments been notified?

India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval has spoken with his British counterpart about the issue. Additionally, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has communicated with its counterparts in all the affected countries, requesting pre-emptive action.

What risks are associated with these planned rallies?

The threats towards Indian diplomats abroad, including attacks on Indian missions and arson attempts, indicate a significant rise in overseas separatist activity. The rallies planned for July 8 pose a security risk to the Indian diplomatic missions. They also test the resolve of the foreign governments to investigate groups threatening violence and their commitment to international security conventions.

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How should the affected countries respond to these threats?

Countries hosting these rallies must ensure adequate protection to Indian diplomatic interests as obligated under international conventions. They should also investigate any group threatening violence and sharing intelligence on any organizations supporting them. The use of “freedom of speech” should not be a cover for failing to prevent criminal acts.

How should India alter its diplomacy regarding this issue?

India must reconsider its public diplomacy in relation to this issue. The repeated calling out of foreign governments, freezing diplomatic contact, or downgrading security for the British High Commission may not be diplomatically effective. Instead of voicing protests, India should leave law enforcement issues to the sovereign governments of those countries.

What is the ideal way for countries to deal with the growing violence from such groups?

Given the escalating threats, it is crucial that there is cooperation between the governments rather than brinkmanship. This cooperation should include sharing information and intelligence, and discussing solutions to address the growing violence by such groups.

34. Standing up for National Anthem: What the Supreme Court has ruled

Source: The post is based on the article “**Standing up for National Anthem: What the Supreme Court has ruled**” published in **The Indian Express** on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Structure, Organization & Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

Relevance: About the SC rulings on singing National Anthem

News: An executive magistrate in Srinagar has sent 11 men to jail after they were detained for allegedly not rising for the National Anthem at an event on June 25 where J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha was present.

What are the Supreme Court rulings related to singing the National Anthem?

Bijoe Emmanuel Case: The law around alleged disrespect to the National Anthem was laid down by the Supreme Court in its 1986 judgment in **Bijoe Emmanuel & Ors vs State Of Kerala & Ors**.

The case involved the three children from the religious group Jehovah’s Witnesses who refused to participate in singing the National Anthem at their school. For this, they were expelled by the school.

However, when the case reached SC, **it held that forcing them to sing the Anthem violated their fundamental right to religion under Article 25 of the Constitution and the court also provided legal protection to them.**

The Supreme Court further stated that Article 25 was incorporated in recognition of the principle that the ultimate measure of a true democracy, lies in the ability that even an insignificant minority finds its identity under the Indian Constitution.

SC also held that standing up respectfully for the National Anthem but not singing does not constitute an offence **under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.**

Shyam Narayan Chouksey Case: The matter involving singing the national anthem again came up to SC in **Shyam Narayan Chouksey vs Union of India (2018)**.

The court initially passed an interim order in 2016 that “all the cinema halls in India shall play the National Anthem before the feature film starts and all present in the hall are obliged to stand up to show respect to the National Anthem”.

However, in its final judgment in 2018, the court modified its interim order.

The court held that the extent that **playing of the National Anthem prior to the screening of feature films in cinema halls is not mandatory, but optional or directory.**

Must Read: [Why make a show of patriotism: SC judge](#)

General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. [Hydrogen will help decarbonize our commercial vehicle traffic](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Hydrogen will help decarbonize our commercial vehicle traffic**” published in “**Live mint**” on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Climate Change – Decarbonization

News: The article discusses the potential of hydrogen-fueled internal combustion engine vehicles for commercial transport in decarbonization of transport sector.

India, despite having per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions less than half the global average, is the world’s third-largest emitter. India also ranks eighth worst on air quality.

Road transport contributes to about 10% of India’s emissions, with over a third coming from medium and heavy commercial vehicles.

What is the suitability of the available options to decarbonize the vehicle fleet in India?

1) Battery-electric vehicles – These vehicles are not economically viable suitable for commercial transport in India due to factors, like;

- Unlike European trucks, Indian commercial vehicles do not carry heavy payloads. Therefore, it becomes difficult to justify the high purchase cost of battery powered vehicles, which is twice as much as diesel vehicle.
- Battery weight will reduce the payload capacity of a truck.

2) Hydrogen-fueled vehicles – These vehicles can be powered by either fuel cells or conventional internal combustion engines.

Hydrogen fuel-cell electric vehicles are even more expensive, and they are suitable for long-distance usage(400-500km), which is not usual for India’s usual commercial vehicles. Also, fuel cells require pure hydrogen, which adds complexity to the supply chain.

Hydrogen-Fuelled Internal Combustion Engine Vehicles are far more suitable for India’s conditions. **1)** These vehicles are 20-40% more expensive than diesel carriers, which is much less compared to other low-emissions alternatives. **2)** They can carry almost the same load as a diesel truck and suit Indian conditions, characterized by variable loads and travel of 250-300km per day. **3)** Such vehicles also do not have stringent requirements of hydrogen purity and can be refueled in 15-30 minutes, compared to hours for battery-run electric vehicles.

What are the measures required to promote adoption in Hydrogen-Fueled Internal Combustion Engine?

First, this technology needs to be given priority in the Indian automotive sector. This assistance can be in the form of technology partnerships, research and development grants, and regulatory support.

Second, there is a need to reduce the cost of hydrogen to about \$2.5-\$3 per kilogram.

Third, adapting existing fuel stations to dispense hydrogen.

Fourth, extending existing production-linked incentive schemes for local Electrolyzer manufacturing beyond the current 2027 expiration.

The transition to hydrogen-fuelled internal combustion engine vehicles could be a great opportunity for India as the hydrogen economy is still nascent globally.

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2. [Nothing Fishy – on India’s fisheries sector](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Nothing Fishy**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Industries and industrial Policies – Agriculture and allied activities

News: A recent study by the Central Marine Fisheries Institute has provided some promising data that can be beneficial for the fisheries sector India.

What is the study?

A recent study by the Central Marine Fisheries Institute found that 91% of the 70 species evaluated had healthy numbers.

What is the potential of fisheries sector in India?

India boasts over 1,500 marine species and 900 freshwater ones, along with ‘exotic’ and brackish water varieties, totaling over 2,800 species on record.

India is the **world’s third-largest fish producer and fourth-largest exporter**.

Fish is a solution to the **country’s nutritional needs**, being a rich, sustainable source of protein.

This study will provide a **boost to the livelihood** of 2.8 crore people, depending upon fishing.

The report findings are **important considering the changes to the marine ecosystem** due to rise in sea-levels, increased intensity of cyclones even on the west coast, and warming of the Indian Ocean.

Fish production has a significantly **lower climate impact than meat production**. Some estimates suggest that it emits six times lower carbon per kilo than meat.

What should be done to promote the fisheries sector?

The Government of India plans to invest ₹30,572 crore (2015-2025) to improve the sector. However, significant work is needed in terms of infrastructure, regulation, oversight, insurance, and policies by both state governments and the Centre.

Issues like the use of [purse seine fishing gear](#) should be resolved amicably.

3. [Competition notice in aviation](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Competition notice in aviation**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Liberalization of Indian Industry

News: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has raised concerns over the proposed merger of Air India, which was acquired by Tata Group in 2022, and Vistara, a joint venture of the group and Singapore Airlines.

The CCI has issued a notice to Air India asking why its merger with Vistara should not be investigated from the perspective of antitrust norms.

The latest notice has come in response to the Tatas’ proposal in April for a merger of Air India and Vistara. After the merger, Singapore Airlines’ stake in Vistara would come down to 25.1 per cent from 49 per cent now.

What are the possible concerns of CCI?

CCI might be of concern that this dilution would make the Tatas a stronger player in aviation industry.

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The market share of the merged Air India entity is estimated at a little over 25 percent, which is way below market leader IndiGo's 55.7 percent. However, on the busiest routes, the entity will hold a substantial market share, i.e., between 38 to 53 percent.

What are the potential Implications of the CCI notices for aviation sector?

First, the CCI's decision to review the merger could potentially delay the deal and set a precedent for defining what constitutes anti-competitive behavior in the aviation sector.

Second, the outcome of this investigation could have significant implications for future mergers and acquisitions in the aviation sector.

Third, the CCI's decision could also impact the market dynamics in the Indian aviation sector, potentially leading to changes in market shares and competition levels.

4. What the Indian economy needs to complete with China

Source: The post is based on the article **"What the Indian economy needs to complete with China"** published in **The Indian Express** on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development**

Relevance: **A comparison of India's and China's growth rates.**

News: The India of today in some ways is similar to China of 2007. China, in terms of per capita income had \$2,694 in 2007, while the IMF has also projected India's per capita income to rise from \$2,379 in 2022 to \$2,601 in 2023.

However, there are significant divergences between the two countries.

What are the areas of divergence?

Investments: China maintained an investment to GDP ratio around 40 percent between 2003 to 2011. In comparison, even during this high growth phase, the investment ratio in India averaged only around 33 percent.

During the period from 2012 to 2021, the Chinese economy continued to increase, with its investment ratio increasing to almost 43 percent, while India's investment ratio fell around 29 percent.

Exports: In 2022-23, India's exports of goods and services surpassed \$770 billion, while imports were around \$890 billion. In 2007, when the Chinese economy was of comparable size, its exports had crossed \$1.2 trillion while imports stood at \$950 billion.

Between 2007 and 2021, **China's exports averaged around 24 percent of its GDP, while India's exports averaged roughly 21 percent during the same period.**

Tariff reduction: The reduction of tariffs has made China as the hub of the global supply chains. Its tariff rate declined from 10.69 percent in 2003 to 8.93 percent in 2007, and further dropped to 5.32 percent in 2020.

In contrast, India's tariff rate declined from 25.63 percent in 2003 to 8.88 percent in 2017 but has risen thereafter.

Labour force participation: China has consistently maintained a higher labor force participation rate compared to India. In 2007, China's labor force participation rate was nearly 73 percent, but it has declined to 67 percent since then.

Whereas, In India, the estimated participation rate was around 50 percent in 2022, although it is higher according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).

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The difference in labor force participation rates between the two countries is mainly due to female participation.

In China, the female labor force participation rate was 66 percent in 2007, which declined to 61 percent by 2022. **Whereas, in India,** the rate was at 30 percent in 2007 and has further decreased to 24 percent in 2022.

However, in terms of the sectoral deployment of their labour forces, there are some similarities.

For instance, China in 2007, had 41% of the labour force engaged in agriculture, 27% in industry and 32% in services. Whereas in India, in 2021, it was 44%, 25% and 31% respectively

What are the challenges present with India's growth?

In India, most of the job creation has occurred in construction, trade, and transport sectors, rather than in manufacturing.

However, **estimates from the economic survey suggest that manufacturing has higher productivity than trade and construction.** Hence, the lack of employment generation in the manufacturing sector remains India's biggest growth challenge.

What can be the way ahead?

It may be challenging for India to witness a rapid growth like that of China, which averaged 8 percent annual growth between 2007 and 2021.

However, **in order to achieve such growth, India needs to** boost investment activity, enhance exports (especially in goods), increase female labor force participation, and promote low and semi-skilled employment in formal manufacturing.

5. [Greedflation and its counter arguments: how consumers ultimately decide prices](#)

Source: This article has been framed based on India Express article "**Clearing the water**", published on 4th July.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy – Pricing and Inflation

News: The article discusses the concept of "greedflation," which refers to price inflation caused by corporate greed for high profits.

The US is facing the record high inflation, since the pandemic. It has given birth to the theory of greedflation.

What are the arguments of theorists favoring greedflation theory?

Proponents of the greedflation theory argue that corporate profit margins have risen significantly since the pandemic, contributing to high inflation.

U.S. corporations have allegedly increased the prices of their goods by more than what was necessary to compensate for higher input costs caused by supply-chain bottlenecks.

As per this theory, market power of large corporations should be controlled and price hikes should be banned to prevent "profiteering".

What are the arguments of theorists opposing greedflation theory?

Critics of the greedflation theory argue that businesses cannot arbitrarily set prices. Prices are set based on what consumers are willing to pay for products.

Businesses cannot force consumers to pay a certain price for their goods.

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The best explanation behind U. S's inflation is U.S. Federal Reserve's expansionary monetary policy during the pandemic. Which has increased the money supply, leading to expansion of purchasing power of users.

It might also be a "cost-push" inflation which is due to inflation to a rise in input costs. **For example**, in the past, a rise in the wages demanded by workers has been blamed for the rise in the prices of goods and services.

6. A rising tide – Govt should revive disinvestment

Source: The post is based on the article "A rising tide – Govt should revive disinvestment" published in **Business Standard** on 4th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Capital Market

Relevance: About the rising stock market indices and its implications for India

News: In the past few days, the stock market indices have reached record highs with a broad movement across various sectors.

What are the reasons behind high stock market indices?

The surge in the stock market has been primarily driven by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), who have purchased over Rs 1.14 trillion worth of equities in the 2023-24 period.

There has also been strong buying from retail investors, both directly as well as via mutual funds, and domestic institutions have also been net positive.

Most sectors have witnessed double-digit returns over the past year, including underperforming sectors like the Nifty IT index and oil & gas, which have seen gains of 5.3% and 3.5% respectively.

Sectors like fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), banks, realty, and metals have all returned over 30 percent and the automobile index 29 percent. However, the biggest winner is the public sector bank index, which is up 67.9 percent.

Credit growth indicates that businesses and consumers are borrowing again. This is supported by the fact that FMCG revenues have grown in Q4 FY23, and so have two-wheeler sales. However, other concerns are still present.

What are the concerns present?

Despite the stock market indices reaching record highs, valuations remain moderate. For instance, the Nifty is currently trading at a price-to-earnings (PE) ratio, which is significantly lower than its early 2021 PE ratio of over 40.

Similarly, the mid-caps and small-caps are also trading at lower valuations than they had hit earlier. **The implication is that the markets could sustain higher prices and valuations.**

What can be the way ahead?

A revival in activity across the primary markets is very likely, due to the optimism across secondary markets.

This presents an opportune moment for the government to revive its disinvestment plans, which have been on hold for some time.

If investors are willing to buy Indian stocks, the government should take advantage of the market conditions and push disinvestment. **This additional revenue can be used to push capital expenditure.**

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7. [A stocktake before the Global Stocktake](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A stocktake before the Global Stocktake**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3-Environment

Relevance: Climate change-related issues

News- The Bonn Climate Change Conference was the last big milestone in climate negotiations before the first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement at COP28 (Conference of the Parties 28) in Dubai.

What is the progress and challenges in global stocktake?

The Global Stocktake assess collective progress towards long-term global goals. This includes progress on greenhouse gas reduction, building resilience to climate impacts, and securing finance to address climate crisis.

In 2015, under the Paris Agreement, countries had agreed to “pursue efforts” to **limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C** and introduced ‘**just transition pathways**’ at COP27. It means that the **transformational pathways** need to be carried out in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned.

The outcome of Bonn Conference was that developing countries were able to strengthen the ‘**just transition pathways**’ as opposed to the developed countries which laid more emphasis on mitigation.

First challenge is that **Climate finance** flows are not aligned with the priorities identified by countries in their **nationally determined contributions**. Many observers say that only a fraction of the \$100 billion has actually been realised .

Another challenge **Adaptation finance has lagged behind mitigation finance**, probably due to the absence of universally agreed-upon metrics.

What is the way forward?

In the efforts towards **aligning climate finance with the Paris Agreement** temperature goals, it is important to **integrate the World Bank in climate change negotiations** and hold it accountable as it is making huge investments in fossil fuels.

India also underlined the need for “**financing**” a ‘**just transition**’ in sectors such as energy and transport in order to reach **net zero emissions by 2070**.

Therefore, the pursuance of the Global Stocktake as per the Paris Agreement needs to comply with the **principle of equity, justice and fairness**.

8. [Explore every possible solar shield we can use:](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Explore every possible solar shield we can use**” published in “**Live mint**” on **4th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Climate Change – solar radiation modification.

News: Recently, the US White House released a report on “solar radiation modification” (SRM).

Why SRM is important?

According to the latest update, the Earth’s temperature may rise beyond 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels earlier than anticipated. Additionally, the risks of surpassing this temperature threshold could be more severe than previously estimated in 2015.

Additionally, progress on climate action has been slow.

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SRM has the potential to reduce the effects of increased temperatures and provide time for better solutions.

What is SRM?

The basic objective of SRM is to **reflect solar heat back**, for which two methods are under consideration.

One is **aerosol injection of the stratosphere**. The second is **marine cloud brightening**. Both can achieve a similar effect by acting as a reflector.

What are the risks of SRM?

There are risks of ecological disruption associated with both methods. For example, aerosols could cause ozone depletion and even hurt biodiversity.

The potential impacts on rainfall and other unknown indirect effects of solar geo-engineering would have global ramifications.

What does the report say?

The report advocates **in-depth research** on SRM to assess all its risks and potential benefits.

The report suggests the adoption of a **'risk versus risk' framework** to assist policymakers in understanding the risks associated with SRM in comparison to the risks posed by the current pace of climate action.

What should be done?

The potential of **space-based solutions**, such as mirror lattices, should also be explored. They could offer more precise control over cooling by directly influencing solar radiation without affecting the air.

Including space-based solutions in official research programs in the US would also encourage other space-faring nations, like India, to enhance their own research.

There should be **transparency** in any intervention efforts, and it is important to thoroughly examine all available options on a global scale.

9. [A macro view of the fiscal health of States](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"A macro view of the fiscal health of States"** published in "The Hindu" on 5th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting

News: The article discusses the fiscal operations of the Indian states and highlights the importance of understanding state finances to improve country's fiscal situation.

Indian states mobilize over a third of total revenue, spend 60% of combined government expenditure, and have around 40% share in government borrowing. The basis of this analysis relies on the data collected from the budgets (2023-24) of 17 major States in India.

What are the major findings of this analysis?

The general government deficit and debt, which increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, has started to recede.

The Union level fiscal deficit declined from 9.1% of GDP in 2020-21 to 5.9% in 2023-24 (BE).

All-State fiscal deficit was 4.1% of GDP in 2020-21, and it is expected to be 2.9% of GDP for the major States in 2023-24 (BE).

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These 17 major States contained their fiscal deficits despite revenue contraction during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Factors that led the improvement in the fiscal situation

1. Union-State fiscal coordination during Covid,
2. Expenditure-side adjustments,
3. improved GST collection,
4. higher tax devolution, and
5. recovery in non-GST revenues.

What are the remaining Fiscal challenges?

The reduction in the fiscal deficit has not been accompanied by a corresponding reduction in revenue deficit. Out of 17 major states, 13 states have a deficit in the revenue account in 2023-24 (BE).

The all-State share of revenue deficit in fiscal deficit for the same year is expected to be 27%.

The 12th Finance Commission identified three States, as fiscally stressed States, in term of revenue deficit. This number has increased to seven.

What should be done?

The focus should be brought back to the management of the revenue deficit. Following are some suggested measures:

Linking interest-free loans to States with a reduction in revenue deficit can prevent diversion of borrowed resources and incentivize fiscal discipline.

Implementing performance incentive grants based on revenue deficit reduction can further encourage fiscal balance and quality expenditure.

10. Carbon credit trading scheme: Waiting to exhale

Source: The post is based on the article “Carbon credit trading scheme: Waiting to exhale” published in “Business Standard” on 5th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment pollution and degradation

News: India is starting a Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), to help local businesses adjust to the European Carbon Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). The CBAM, which begins this October, sets stricter standards for the export of carbon-heavy goods such as cement, steel, aluminium, and fertilisers.

What is India’s Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)?

India’s CCTS is a program designed to allow companies to trade carbon credits. These credits represent a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. If a company emits less than its allowable limit, it can sell its surplus credits to a company that exceeds its limit. This scheme helps India manage and reduce its overall carbon emissions.

What is the regulatory structure of India’s CCTS?

The regulatory structure of the CCTS is overseen by a **National Steering Committee**. This committee is made up of 18 ministries and departments, providing comprehensive oversight over the scheme.

The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) is identified as the only regulator in the scheme.

Additionally, the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency** acts as the market’s administrator, with the Grid Controller of India handling registrations of market players.

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Despite traditionally being overseen by the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi)**, the carbon credit market's regulation falls under the CERC in this scheme.

What are the various challenges?

Regulatory challenges: In October 2021, the Supreme Court stated that the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) would regulate the spot market for power, but only for immediate deliveries up to eleven days. Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) would oversee the futures and options market. However, the CCTS is to be regulated by CERC. However, carbon credit is essentially a financial market, so as per the SC order SEBI should be the regulator.

Complexity in market structure: The market structure of CCTS is complex, involving multiple agencies and oversight bodies. Companies might struggle with compliance due to the complicated structure, potentially increasing the cost of obtaining carbon credits.

Unclear validity of international certificates: The framework does not clearly indicate if international carbon abatement certificates will be accepted alongside domestic ones in the new scheme. This could cause confusion and difficulties for companies looking to comply with emission norms.

Fungibility of Carbon Certificates: There are concerns about whether the carbon certificates should be interchangeable across different platforms and tenors. While financial markets often benefit from subdividing certificates to create more value, the carbon market might be more efficient with a standard, fungible product. The current notification is silent on this matter, causing uncertainty among market players.

[11. Navigating the carbon-tax era in trade](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Navigating the carbon-tax era in trade**” published in **Business standard** on **5th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3-Environment

Relevance: Climate change related policy

News- The process for the **EU's Border Carbon Adjustment Tax (Border-CAT)** is set to start this year and will kick in from January 2026, initially covering steel, aluminum, cement, fertilizers, hydrogen, and electricity.

This tax could cause trade disruptions, as developed countries, accounting for 65% of global trade, may charge a carbon tax of 20-35% over import duties.

What are the impacts of the EU's Border Carbon Adjustment Tax?

Firstly, World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments on tariffs **will become meaningless** for countries charging a carbon tax. Free trade agreements (FTAs) with developed countries, which are charging carbon tax, will **become one-sided**.

Secondly, the EU's exports may become expensive. While China may become the lowest-cost supplier of clean energy-compliant products. It will do so through a combination of hydroelectric and green hydrogen-led production of steel, aluminium, cars, and other industrial products.

Thirdly, the world will be divided into countries charging carbon tax and the rest of the world (RoW).

Fourthly, it may reduce the EU's exports to RoW markets, where cheaper products will be available from countries that do not charge a carbon tax.

Finally, the tax will not stop dirty imports; it will just tax them. So, the carbon tax will have an insignificant impact on the reduction of global emissions.

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What should be the actions taken by Indian government and industry?

Set up a **carbon trading mechanism and re-designate customs**, excise duty, and cesses charged on petroleum, coal and other items as carbon tax. This will reduce the amount of tax to be paid to the EU.

The government must devise a WTO compatible **carbon tax retaliation mechanism**. It should sign new FTAs with developed countries after resolving the carbon tax issues.

The government may consider a **new PLI for low carbon trial projects** and must create a **cadre of energy auditors** to help firms with emissions data, ensuring their accreditation by the EU system.

Each firm must know its unit's **current state of baseline emissions** and calculate the monetary impact associated with them.

They should **set internal targets to decarbonize** and evaluate the costs of adopting renewables.

Large firms may consider setting up two production lines — one for carbon tax markets, and the other for the RoW and develop strategies to enhance their competitiveness in the new trade regime.

[12. What explains the resilience of Indian manufacturing?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**What explains the resilience of Indian manufacturing?**” published in **Live Mint** on **5th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development, Industrial Policy**

Relevance: **About the improving manufacturing sector in India**

News: The Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) shows India as the only large economy whose factory output is growing significantly.

What is Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)?

Read Here: [What is Purchasing Managers Index PMI?](#) and [Purchasing Managers Index \(PMI\) for manufacturing slipped to two years low](#)

PMI involves surveys of purchasing managers in 500 manufacturing companies across 19 industries in India.

It helps analysts and economists to correctly anticipate the changing economic trends in GDP, inflation, employment and industrial production.

How is India's manufacturing faring?

The PMI was at 57.8 in June, slightly lower than 58.7 in May. A PMI above 50 indicates expansion or growth compared to the previous month, while a value below 50 signifies contraction.

India's manufacturing PMI is indicating the resilience of the country's factory sector.

The first three months of FY24 also saw a high manufacturing PMI, indicating a rebound in manufacturing, after a contraction of 1.3% in FY23.

This has led to an increase in business confidence and optimism around future business activity among the industry.

What has caused the manufacturing sector to revive?

Strong demand from both domestic and international markets led to significant enhancements in production, sourcing, and hiring.

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As per the experts, this positive trend has been due to **the government's increased spending, especially in capital expenditure**, and due to the **increasing demand for private consumption**, which grew by 7.5% in FY23.

What does this mean for the economy?

Strong manufacturing performance is crucial for India to achieve high GDP growth.

However, **this growth is accompanied by higher inflation and wage costs**. Despite this, since demand is high, it will allow companies to pass on the increased costs to consumers.

How are other economies faring?

Major economies worldwide are facing challenges in their manufacturing sectors.

China's June PMI of 50.5 was lower than May's 50.9, and manufacturing business confidence has reached an eight-month low. **China is also struggling with** declining export demand and falling employment.

Even the Eurozone saw a PMI of 43.4 in June, indicating further contraction compared to May's 44.8. Similarly, **the United States recorded** a PMI of 46.3 in June, marking a six-month low compared to May's 48.4.

The contraction in the UK's manufacturing sector has also worsened.

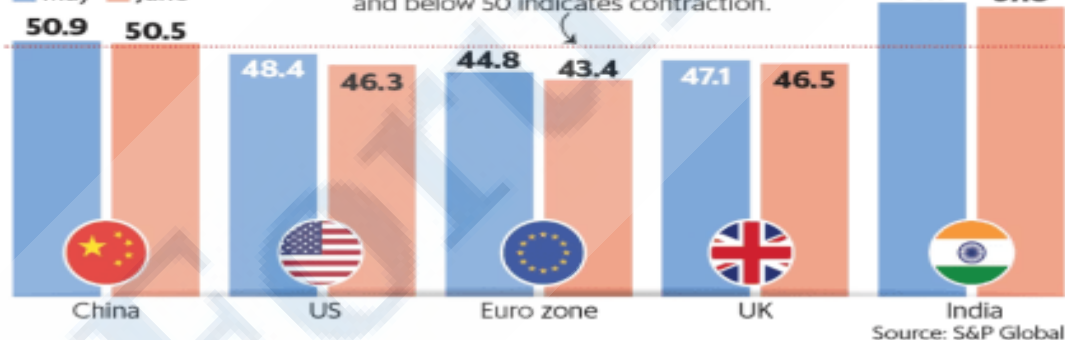
State of global manufacturing

At a time when most large economies are struggling, India's PMI was at 57.8 in June, slightly lower than 58.7 in May.

Manufacturing PMI

■ May ■ June

A PMI above 50 indicates growth and below 50 indicates contraction.



Graphic: Mint

Source: Mint

13. [Next steps for GST – Administrative and policy interventions needed](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Next steps for GST – Administrative and policy interventions needed**” published in **Business Standard** on 5th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Fiscal Policy, Growth and Development

Relevance: concerns present with the GST system and measures needed to address them

News: After six years of implementation, the goods and services tax (GST) system seems to have stabilized, with monthly revenues of at least ~1.5 trillion.

A number of interventions over the years, such as the introduction of e-way bills, the use of e-invoice and technology, have improved efficiency.

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However, despite the achievements of the past six years, there are still concerns present with the GST system.

What are the concerns present with the GST system?

In a recent special drive conducted by tax officials, approximately 60,000 suspicious entities were identified. After verifying 50,000 of them, it was **discovered that about 25% were bogus**.

Hence, **to strengthen the system, the administration is planning to introduce biometric authentication along with geo-tagging**.

The tax authorities have also found a number of instances of **fake input tax credit claims**. For **example**, GST officials in recent months have busted over 300 syndicates with estimated fake input tax credit claims of about ~25,000 crore.

Hence, in this regard, it is important for new systems or changes in tax administration **to minimize compliance burdens** and allow registered entities to focus on their businesses.

Must Read: [The unsung hero – After five years, it seems GST has begun to show sustained growth even as it has many weaknesses and policy challenges](#)

What can be the way ahead?

First, there is a need for **strengthening supervision in a sustained manner** to check tax evasion and fraudulent claims of input tax credit.

Second, the GST Council must also make necessary interventions. For instance, although there has been an improvement in revenue collection in recent years, the system still falls short of the initial expectations.

The estimated GST collection in 2022-23 was 6.65% of the GDP, only slightly better than the 6.3% collected in 2016-17. Also, collection may be affected when the extended compensation cess expires.

Therefore, **it is important that the GST Council addresses the long-pending issue of rationalising both rates and slabs**. Reducing the number of slabs, along with adjustments in rates, will improve efficiency and collection.

14. [Pro-Khalistan 'freedom rally' in Toronto: Ramping up noise](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**Let Them Think**", published in The Times of India on 5th July, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Internal Security, external threats to internal security

News: The article discusses the resurgence of radical pro-Khalistan propaganda in Canada, which is a cause for concern for India.

What are some of the examples of rise of pro-khalistan activities in Canada?

The perpetrators of June 1985 bombing of Kanishka, Air India's Flight 182 were reported to be the members of the Babbar Khalsa International. However, they went unpunished due to a sloppy investigation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

No action has been taken against the radical groups such as Sikhs for Justice, who are escalating their activities in Canada.

A planned pro-Khalistan "freedom rally" in Toronto was organised on July 8, which openly threatens violence against Indian diplomats posted in Canada.

A month ago, a parade was held in Toronto by pro-khalistani figures, depicting the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

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What is the reason behind inaction against pro-Khalistani figures in Canada?

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government is dependent on Jagmeet Singh, a known Khalistani propagandist and leader of the New Democratic Party.

Why is it an internal security matter for India?

Since the initiation of the **"Referendum 2020" campaign** about five years ago in countries with large Sikh diasporas (Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK), the pro-Khalistan activities in Punjab have increased. The sudden emergence of khalistani leader Amritpal Singh is an example. The referendum is aimed at separation of Punjab from India.

The developments in Canada are exacerbating security concerns in Punjab.

However, it is also true that several failures of Punjab's political elites to address economic and social challenges has also contributed to this problem.

15. It will take nuclear energy for global shipping to hit net zero

Source: The post is based on the article **"It will take nuclear energy for global shipping to hit net zero"** published in **Live Mint** on **6th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure, Environment

Relevance: measures needed to achieve net zero in the maritime sector.

News: Shipping industry, which consumes about 5% of the world's oil and emits about 3% of its greenhouse gases, is moving towards a net-zero target.

How is the shipping industry moving towards a net-zero target?

The International Maritime Organization (IMO), a United Nations body responsible for regulating the maritime industry, is meeting in London to strengthen measures to reduce maritime carbon footprint.

A draft is being prepared that **would commit the maritime sector to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050**.

Rich countries along with Marshall Islands (operating one of the largest ship registries globally) are also supporting a carbon tax on shipping.

Whereas, China, a major global exporter, is working to rally developing nations to resist stricter measures on carbon emissions in the shipping industry.

What are the issues involved with the shipping industry in achieving a net zero?

The size and duration of ships' journeys make it difficult to adopt the same technologies used in green power plants and cars. **Only smaller ferries with short routes have the potential** to operate on batteries or solar power.

Wind power is also unpredictable and scarce to meet the needs of the shipping industry. **Even wind-assisted ships currently under construction are unlikely to** have a significant impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This means that there is a need for some sort of fuel for the shipping industry. Out of the various options being explored, **nuclear power has the capability to make the shipping industry achieve a net zero**.

How is nuclear power a suitable form of energy for the shipping industry?

Nuclear energy is already being used in powering numerous military submarines and aircraft carriers. This offers an established zero-carbon solution for the maritime sector.

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Further, nuclear power would not be needed for all the merchant ships. Only about 17,000 large ships are responsible for around 80% of the sector's greenhouse emissions.

According to a study, atomic ships were found to cost more by only 19% compared to the conventional vessels.

This makes them more competitive than other low-carbon fuel options and potentially cheaper than the current diesel-heavy fuel mix used in conventional vessels. However, there are also challenges present with nuclear energy.

What are the challenges present with adopting nuclear energy in the shipping industry?

Nuclear energy faces a significant challenge from the people, especially when it is related to oceans. **For example**, a protest emerged in Japan during the planned release of wastewater from Japan's Fukushima Daiichi atomic plant into the ocean.

Further, **many countries restrict nuclear power on their territory. For instance, Italy and Denmark have strong anti-nuclear regulation.**

Moreover, **piracy risks for uranium reactors are also present because** merchant ships don't carry the arsenal that military vessels use to deter piracy. There are also **issues with the leakage of the reactors**, if any accidents happen.

What can be the way ahead?

There has been adoption of nuclear-powered ships which operate only on main routes between major ports. However, **if achieving net-zero emissions in the shipping industry is a priority, nuclear energy needs to be adopted at large scale.**

16. The universe's hum and an opportunity to explore

Source: The post is based on the article "The universe's hum and an opportunity to explore" published in "The Indian Express" on 6th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Awareness in the field of space

News: Recently, astronomers from various initiatives have reported the detection of ultra-low frequency gravitational waves, allowing to probe previously unseen parts of the universe.

What are gravitational waves?

Read here: What is LIGO-India, the Indian node in the global network of labs to probe the universe

How are scientists trying to detect gravitational waves?

Scientists are using a network of millisecond pulsars distributed across our galaxy as a giant detector of gravitational waves. Millisecond pulsars are very dense stars that rotate rapidly, emitting extremely regular pulses of radio waves. Scientists record the timing of these pulses over many years. If a gravitational wave passes through the space between the Earth and a pulsar, it will slightly change the time it takes for the pulses to reach us. By analyzing changes in these timing patterns, scientists hope to detect the presence of gravitational waves.

What is LISA and how does it work?

LISA, short for Laser Interferometer Space Antenna, is a future project (scheduled to be launched in the early 2030s) by the European Space Agency. It's designed to detect gravitational waves from space.

LISA will work using three spacecraft. They will be arranged in a triangle, millions of kilometers apart. Each spacecraft will shoot a laser beam at the other two, forming three 'arms' of laser light.

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If a gravitational wave comes through, the distances between the spacecraft change slightly. This makes the laser beams take a little longer or shorter to reach each other.

Scientists can measure these changes in time to detect the gravitational waves. LISA's large size will help it in finding lower-frequency waves, possibly revealing new space events.

What is the significance and origin of “Nanohertz Waves”?

Nanohertz waves are ultra-low frequency gravitational waves. They are believed to originate from supermassive black holes orbiting each other, typically found at the center of galaxies. When these galaxies collide or merge, the black holes could pair off and produce these waves.

These waves could also come from other exotic events like cosmic strings or early universal expansion, known as inflation.

The detection of nanohertz waves, often referred to as the “hum” of the universe, could give us a way to study the earliest events in the universe and uncover mysteries of its formation and evolution.

What are the Challenges with Detecting Low Frequency Waves, like nanohertz waves?

Detecting low frequency gravitational waves like nanohertz waves presents unique challenges:

Need for larger detectors: Low frequency waves require larger detectors to be detected. For instance, to pick up nanohertz waves, a detector as big as a galaxy would be needed, which is practically impossible to build.

Complex data analysis: It is not easy to identify the tiny signal from the background noise. It involves collecting data over several years and performing intricate statistical analyses to confidently confirm the detection of a gravitational wave.

Compensation for variables: Other factors, like varying pulsar timings, have to be accounted for, making the detection process more complex.

Requirement of long-term observations: Patience is key. It takes meticulous long-term observations and massive collaborative efforts to confidently detect these elusive waves.

17. In Manipur, Army's leadership has experience and ability to do its job

Source: The post is based on the article “Syed Ata Hasnain writes: In Manipur, Army's leadership has experience and ability to do its job” published in “The Indian Express ” on 6th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Security challenges and their management in border areas

News: The Spear Corps of the Indian Army recently shared a video on social media that drew both praise and criticism. The video showed a group of activists, primarily women, blocking and surrounding Indian Army personnel during an operation. This incident highlights the challenges faced by the security forces in carrying out their duties amid local interferences.

Why is Manipur witnessing turmoil?

Manipur is witnessing turmoil due to rising tensions between two ethnic communities, the **Meiteis and the Kukis**.

Historical grievances have escalated, threatening the peaceful coexistence of these communities.

Additionally, segments of the local population, primarily women and children, are obstructing security forces in their attempts to maintain stability and order.

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This method is causing significant concerns, as it hinders timely response during critical situations. The situation's complexity requires careful handling to avoid it escalating into large-scale conflict.

What are the lessons from history?

The lessons learned from past conflicts in Rwanda, Jammu and Kashmir, and Sri Lanka are

- a) From Rwanda (1994), the ethnic conflict between Hutus and Tutsis illustrates how majorities can oppress minorities, leading to long-lasting discord,
- b) In Jammu and Kashmir (1989), the forced migration of Kashmiri Pandits warns us about the enduring wounds of ethnic cleansing,
- c) Sri Lanka's Tamil-Sinhala conflict highlights how ignoring minority sentiments can lead to protracted strife.

All these historical instances underscore that military victories alone can't resolve deep-rooted issues. Achieving peace requires people-to-people understanding and reconciliation, as demonstrated by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

What should be done to overcome this issue?

Building bridges: It's essential to encourage dialogue between the Meiteis and Kukis to understand and address their grievances. Communication is crucial to prevent misunderstandings from escalating into full-blown conflicts.

Promoting reconciliation: Inspired by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, similar initiatives could be considered. These platforms can help foster understanding and promote healing between conflicting groups.

Supporting security forces: Finally, it's vital to ensure that security forces can perform their duties effectively. This includes preventing obstruction from sections of the population and providing necessary resources. The Indian Army's balanced approach, respecting local sensibilities while maintaining order, should be upheld. Trust in their experience and wisdom can guide the region towards stability.

18. Should Internet shutdowns be used to maintain public order?

Source: The post is based on the article "**Should Internet shutdowns be used to maintain public order?**" published in "The Hindu" on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

News: Between 2016 and 2022, 60% of Internet shutdowns across the world took place in India.

Why India has more Internet shutdowns than any other country?

Around 40-50% of these shutdowns are implemented due to communal tensions.

Many shutdowns are enforced during protests to curb dissent and maintain public order.

Some are even imposed to prevent cheating during exams, and many during religious processions.

What is the constitutional and judicial view on the internet shutdown?

India's Constitution does not directly address the issue of Internet shutdowns, but various provisions indirectly relate to it and have been interpreted by the judiciary in several important rulings.

Article 19 (Freedom of Speech and Profession): Article 19 of the Indian Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression, and the right to practise

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any profession. These rights have been interpreted to encompass the freedom to access the Internet. In several rulings, the Indian Supreme Court has held that the right to access the Internet falls under the scope of Article 19.

Article 21(Right to Life and Liberty): Article 21 protects the right to life and personal liberty. Over the years, this has been interpreted by the courts to include the right to education and the right to access the Internet, among others. The Supreme Court, in the Anuradha Bhasin and Faheema Shirin rulings, has underscored the importance of preserving Internet access as an extension of the rights under Article 21.

Judicial interpretation and guidelines: The Supreme Court has ruled that Internet shutdowns should be temporary, limited in scope, lawful, and proportionate. These guidelines aim to balance the need for maintaining law and order and preserving individuals' rights to freedom of speech, profession, and personal liberty.

What are the legal provisions related to internet shutdown in India?

India's legislation does not directly address Internet shutdowns, but several legal frameworks are used to govern the practice.

Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC): This section allows district authorities to issue orders in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger. However, after Anuradha Bhasin judgment by the Supreme Court, there has been a shift towards imposing Internet shutdowns under the more specific Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017, rather than the broader and more general Section 144.

The Information Technology Act, 2000: The law allows for the blocking of websites that present threats to national sovereignty, integrity, or defence. This Act is often invoked as a legal basis for some Internet shutdowns, though the Act itself was designed for website blocking rather than entire network shutdowns.

Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017: It is the primary piece of legislation that governs Internet shutdowns in India. According to these rules, Internet services can be temporarily suspended in cases of public emergency or for public safety. The order for a shutdown must come from a government official not below the rank of a Joint Secretary to the Government of India, and a review committee must assess the situation within five working days.

Read more: [Internet shutdowns in India: impacts and way forward](#)

What are the impacts of the internet shut down?

Economically, they can be devastating. Many businesses, particularly those reliant on the Internet, can be severely impacted, leading to lost revenues and potentially, job losses.

In terms of education, prolonged shutdowns can hinder students' access to online learning materials and opportunities, potentially costing them scholarships or even academic years. This impact has become even more pronounced with the rise of digital education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Healthcare services can also be affected, as telemedicine and online health information become inaccessible during a shutdown. Additionally, **essential services** like food delivery or digital payments can be disrupted, affecting people's everyday lives.

Moreover, the restriction on the free flow of information can **curtail freedom of speech and expression, affecting democratic processes and potentially leading to human rights violations.**

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19. [Express View on Yamuna status report: River abandoned](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Express View on Yamuna status report: River abandoned” published in “Indian Express” on 8th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

News: In January, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) established a panel led by Delhi’s lieutenant governor to find way to rejuvenate the Yamuna river in the capital. However, a six-month status report by the Delhi government reveals minimal reduction in pollution levels.

What are the major findings of the status report on the Yamuna river rejuvenation?

Major finding are as follows:

- The pollution levels in Yamuna river have barely decreased despite interventions.
- The sewage treatment plants in Delhi are not fully utilized, causing untreated sewage to flow into the river.
- Many poor communities lack access to the sewage pipe network.
- Despite expanding the sewerage network to some unauthorized areas, around 245 million gallons of sewage remain untreated daily.
- A 15-year old project designed to trap sewage has failed to meet deadlines and didn’t account for Delhi’s growing population.
- City authorities like the DDA, municipal corporation, and pollution control agencies aren’t collaborating effectively.
- More than 70% of Yamuna’s pollution comes from Delhi, making it crucial to improve the city’s pollution control.
- Much of the Yamuna River in Delhi is so polluted that it’s unfit for bathing.

This underlines the critical need for effective pollution control measures in the capital.

20. [Internationalisation of Indian currency: The rupee challenge](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Internationalisation of Indian currency: The rupee challenge**” published in **The Indian Express** on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Monetary Policy, Growth & Development

Relevance: About the benefits and challenges associated with Internationalization of rupee.

News: Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) has recommended several measures for Internationalization of rupee.

What is internationalization of rupee?

[Click Here to Read](#)

What are the benefits of internationalization of rupee?

[Click Here to Read](#)

It also protects the economy from sudden stops and reversals of capital flows.

What are the different measures recommended by the IDG?

Read Here: [Internationalization of the Rupee: Explained](#)

What are the challenges with the internationalization of the rupee?

As per reports, even though the central bank had allowed banks in July last year to settle international trade in rupees with 18 countries, **there has been little progress in adopting this facility.**

For example, Russia favors the yuan or the dirham as transaction mediums, even though there has been a significant increase in oil imports from India.

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What can be the way ahead?

The process of internationalising the Indian rupee **requires permitting easier and more unconstrained transactions in the rupee.**

The development of financial and foreign exchange markets will also play a critical role in determining the pace of internationalization of the currency.

Further, as the Indian economy grows in size and as its trade linkages with other countries grow stronger, more space will be created for using the rupee in international transactions.