



9 PM

Compilation

12th to 17th June, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. [Our population question](#)

Source: This post has been created based on the article “**Our population question**”, published in **Business Standard** on **12th June 2023**.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 1 – Population and associated issues

Context: India is projected to surpass China and become the world’s most populous country around mid-2023, reaching a population of approximately 1.45 billion. The article discusses its environmental consequences for India.

While it’s undeniable that a larger population will require more resources, the relationship between population growth and environmental degradation isn’t straightforward. For instance, countries like the US and Australia, despite having smaller populations, have a larger environmental footprint than India.

Why environmental footprints are smaller in India?

India’s smaller environmental footprint is largely due to its poverty, which necessitates frugality. As India’s wealth increases, so too might its consumption and environmental impact. This is already evident in the increasing amounts of waste and air pollution as the country becomes wealthier.

What are challenges in front of India?

India is already seeing a decline in its total fertility rate, which has dropped below the replacement level. So, it won’t be a challenge in front of India.

The challenge lies in managing the population dividend and ensuring that as the population grows, the country does not follow the same environmentally destructive path as other wealthier nations.

General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. [Amplify the subject of adolescent girl nutrition](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Amplify the subject of adolescent girl nutrition**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **12th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector

News- **The** article explains the Issues related to poor nutrition among adolescent girls

What is the importance of proper nutrition among adolescent girls?

Adolescence is a period of **cognitive development**. Improving **access to nutrition** during this period compensates the **nutrient deficiencies** acquired during childhood.

Adolescent health is a significant indicator of **women’s labour force participation** in India in the long term. Better nutrition improves every young girl’s **prospect to participate in productive activities**.

What are issues related to nutrition among adolescent girls?

Adolescent girls are vulnerable to **undernutrition and anaemia**. As per **National Family Health Survey-5**, **59.1% of adolescent girls** were found to be **anaemic**. **NFHS-4** numbers reported over **41.9% of school-going girls** as **underweight**.

What are the impacts of poor nutrition among adolescent girls?

Poor nutrition can lead to **cognitive impairments**. This can result in lower **educational attainment**. It limits **opportunities for employment and economic self-sufficiency** later in life.

Undernourished adolescent girls are also at a higher risk of **chronic diseases and pregnancy complications**. It can lead to a **higher health-care burden** on both families and communities.

If our girls are less healthy and less educated, they are less likely to **participate fully** in society, politics, or community involvement.

What is the way forward to address the issue of poor nutrition among adolescent girls?

There is a need for interventions that not only focus on **good nutrition** but also adopt a **life-cycle approach**. This investment can also help break the **intergenerational cycle of poverty**.

Well-nourished girls will have **healthy babies** and provide **better care** for their families.

The **convergence of various government initiatives** such as the Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) within the umbrella of the Prime Minister’s Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition programme (POSHAN) 2.0 is a step in the right direction.

Targeted adolescent-oriented schemes such as the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram could include stronger **awareness and nutrition education** programmes.

Targeted and regionally contextualised Social and Behaviour Change Communication efforts around adolescent girls’ nutrition can lead to the **adoption of good practices**.

There is a need for **effective convergence and collaborations** among all the relevant departments. **Routine training** of health workers for **effective implementation and monitoring** of various schemes is also a crucial step in this process.

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A **holistic narrative** on adolescent girls' nutrition. It should explain its linkages with **mental and physical well-being, individual productivity** and overall economic growth of the country. This must be packed with evidence/data.

2. [Governors cannot indefinitely hold back Bills](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Governors cannot indefinitely hold back Bills**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **12th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure

Relevance- Issues related to Governor power

News- Recently issues have arisen in various States between Chief Ministers and Governors, with regard to the passing of Bills. Chief Ministers feel that Governors have not acted for long period of time on Bills presented for their assent.

What is the constitutional position of the Governor?

The **Legislature of a State** comprises the Governor and the Legislative Assembly and a Legislative Council. The Governor has **little autonomy** in his functioning.

He can act only on the “**advice**” of his **Council of Ministers**, with the Chief Minister as the head of the Council.

However, the Governor can exercise his discretion **independent of the Council of Ministers in some cases**. As per **Article 163(2) of the Constitution**, this decision of the Governor on discretion of his cannot be challenged.

In **Shamsher Singh v State of Punjab (1974)**, the Supreme Court held that a President or a Governor can exercise their **discretion independent of their Ministers** only where the **Constitution expressly permits** them.

What is Governor power with respect to bills passed by the assembly?

Article 200 states that the Governor can either give his **assent or withhold it or return** the Bill with certain suggestions.

The Governor may return the Bill if it is not a Money Bill for **reconsidering the Bill**. The House has six months to decide whether or not to accept this request.

Once the House returns the Bill to the Governor, he must **give his assent** whether or not his recommendations have been accepted.

The Governor has discretion to **refer a Bill to the President**, if it takes away the **powers of the High Court**.

Does the Governor have discretion to indefinitely withhold assent to a Bill?

In **Purushothaman Nambudiri v State of Kerala, SC** held that a Bill pending the Governor's assent would not lapse upon the **dissolution of the House**.

It held that since there is **no time limit** prescribed under **Articles 200 and 201** for the Governor or the President to give their assent. Framers of the Constitution did not want a Bill pending assent from the Governor to lapse on **dissolution of the House**.

In **Shamsher Singh case**, the Court held that it is only with respect to the **reserving the bill for Presidential assent** that the Governor exercises **discretion independent** of the Council.

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In the **Nabam Rebia case**, the Court also held that the Governor **exercises discretion** only with regard to **reservation of the bill for consideration of the President**.

The Governor has **no discretion to indefinitely withhold assent to a Bill**. Refusing to act on a Bill is in **violation of the Constitution**. Governor's action or inaction in this regard is subjected to **judicial review**.

3. [JNU VC on NCERT deletions: There is no conspiracy](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“JNU VC on NCERT deletions: There is no conspiracy”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **12th June 2023**.

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

Relevance- Issues related to curriculum

News– Recently, there was controversy over textbook revision by the National Council of Educational Research and Training.

What is the rationale for recent changes in NCERT textbooks?

Some changes were made to reflect the **changing realities**. These include the incorporation of content related to **information technology and computers**.

The textbooks are revised in accordance with the **reforms in the country's educational system**. The **National Education Policy 2020** emphasises on **reducing the content load** and providing opportunities for **experiential learning with a creative mindset**.

The current process of rationalisation is motivated by the **effects of the pandemic** on the educational system. There was **loss of learning and increased load** on the students. This was also a concern expressed by the **Parliamentary Standing Committee On Education**.

What are arguments against the criticism of recent NCERT textbook revision?

The **periodic table** has not been removed from the school education curriculum. It has been **reassigned to Unit 3 in the Class 11 textbook**. **Darwin's theory of evolution** is covered in “great detail” in **chapter six of the Class 12 textbook**.

The missing reference to Maulana Azad from the Class 11 Political Science textbook is not a part of the **current process of rationalisation**. The reference was dropped from 2014-15 onwards.

The major chunk of confusion is caused by the **deletion of some items**. The critics argued they were not included in the **notification of the rationalisation**.

This is part of the **regular process of reprinting** where **minor deletions** are not notified to avoid **unnecessary confusion**.

These textbooks are for this year alone. The textbooks are supposed to be **revised regularly** by the **Textbook Development Committee constituted in 2005**.

This committee is mandated to develop the syllabus in line with the **2005 National Curriculum Framework**. Each proposed change is first sent to the Textbook Committee, which is tasked to **analyse and recommend** them.

These decisions were taken by the **expert panel**. The NCERT arrived at these decisions after consultation with **“in-house” domain experts**, as well as **25 external specialists**.

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Changes and revisions in textbooks, and controversies are nothing new. In 2006, a chapter on Sikhism had to be changed because of enormous controversy.

4. [Lessons from Kathal: Tracking India's missing girls](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Lessons from Kathal: Tracking India's missing girls**” published in the **Indian Express** on **12th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

Relevance: About India's missing girls.

News: The recent movie Kathal has spurred the debate about India's missing girls.

About data on India's missing girls

Child victims of kidnapping and abduction (2021)

Age Group	Female	Male	Total
Below 6 years	484	418	902
6-12 years	2454	1711	4165
12-16 years	21389	4425	25814
16-18 years	33731	4402	38133

Data is from the National Crime Records Bureau(NCRB)

Source: Indian Express

In 2021, 69,014 cases were registered across the country, of which 55,120 pertained to girls aged 12-18. Marriage, sexual abuse, domestic servitude, and forced labour/slavery remain the main motives behind the kidnapping and abduction of children.

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What are the reasons behind India's missing girls?

Unrecovered Victims of Kidnapping and Abduction from previous years (as on 31.12.21)

Age group	Female	Male	Total
Below 6 years	742	679	1421
6-12 years	3325	2350	5675
12-16 years	13757	4178	17935
16-18 years	21263	4051	25314

Data is from the National Crime Records Bureau(NCRB)

Source: Indian Express

Bride crisis: The **abysmal sex ratio in several states** of the Hindi heartland has resulted in a “bride crisis”, and the sale of girls, as young as 12 years old, for marriage to elderly men in their forties or fifties.

False promises: Seemingly trustworthy extended family members or neighbours might be the culprits who would lure a girl away with the promise of a city life, a plush job or a husband of choice.

The common initial assumption of the police: Police generally believe that an adolescent girl has voluntarily eloped with a boy. This presumption delays an immediate response by the police, leading to a critical loss of the “golden hours” to trace the victim.

What are the steps taken to identify India's missing girls?

Prompt filing of FIR: The activism of the courts, women, child commissions and political leadership led to a trend of prompt registering FIRs at least in cases of missing minor children, both boys and girls.

The strict supervision of the courts and of senior police leadership has now made it difficult for the police force to “close” unsolved cases of missing children.

Section 366 of the IPC (kidnapping, abducting or inducing a woman to compel her marriage): In the case of an adolescent girl, where the parents admit to the girl having a possible romantic liaison with a boy, Section 366 is invoked.

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Anti-human Trafficking Units (AHTU): These are established under the aegis of the Ministry of Home Affairs and are now functional in every district of the country. It plays a remarkable role in helping trace missing children from faraway places. Their technique helped trace the families of over 200 missing children from all corners of the country within a short span of 12 months.

Promotion incentives: Providing promotion incentives for tracing missing children has yielded positive results. For example, in 2021, the Delhi police announced an out-of-turn promotion incentive for constables and head constables, who would trace more than 50 children below the age of 14 in a year. As a result, for the first time in decades, the number of children recovered by the Delhi police that year was more than the number reported missing in the year.

Read more: [Finding the data on missing girls](#)

What more should be done?

Improve mobile surveillance: Mobile surveillance services are now amply used in every district for crime detection. This must repeatedly keep scanning the locations of relevant mobile numbers and social media accounts of the victim or her abductor for their possible location.

Focus on prevention of abduction: A gazetted police officer may be designated as a nodal supervisor to oversee and ensure that mobile surveillance exercise is carried out for all missing children not just after the commission of the crime.

Install CCTVs: All the important bus stations, railway stations, taxi stands, and toll booths should be equipped with high-resolution CCTV cameras providing exhaustive coverage for faster tracking and tracing the escape method of the accused.

Link child records: Children are too young to explain where their home is or who can be contacted. So, the government should link the records of all the orphanages, child shelter homes, and Nari Niketans in the country. The District Probation Officers or the District Social Welfare Officers should be made overall supervisors and custodians of such data centres.

Read more: [Maharashtra records highest number of missing women:NCRB](#)

5. [How technology can help India's urban centres become disabled friendly](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**How technology can help India's urban centres become disabled friendly**” published in the **Indian Express** on **12th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

Relevance: About making urban centres disable friendly.

News: Persons with disabilities face many challenges in participating fully in urban life.

Why does India need to make urban centres disable friendly?

Rapid urbanisation and the population of Divyang in urban areas: India is urbanising rapidly and is projected to add four new megacities by 2030. The country's urban population is estimated to cross 675 million.

According to the 2011 Census, one in three persons with disabilities in India or roughly eight million people already live in cities.

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Rise of Divyang's share in population: The number of persons with recognised disabilities as a share of the population could rise due to disaster and climate risks, demographic changes and broader definitions of disability in line with global norms.

How India is leveraging technology to make urban centres disable friendly?

Innovative technologies and ICT are key to ensuring an inclusive urban transformation and essential for improving and increasing the quality of life of all citizens.

-The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in partnership with the UN in India hosted the first edition of the **Smart Solutions Challenge and Inclusive Cities Awards** in 2022. It helped in crowd-sourcing tech-based solutions and innovations for addressing city-level accessibility and inclusion challenges.

-Smart cities like Bhubaneswar have deployed innovative transport and mobility solutions.

-Several solutions and assistive technologies such as Fifth Sense, IncluMaps, AxxessAble and myUDAAN are supporting independent living for persons with disabilities. Many of these solutions have utilised frontier technologies like AI and machine learning extensively to contextualise solutions.

-Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has also launched the **G20 Digital Innovation Alliance** (G20-DIA) to showcase innovative solutions and create an alliance of players in the innovation ecosystem.

What more should be done to make urban centres disable friendly?

The crucial role of the state: Innovations that promote inclusivity are considered unprofitable by investors. So, the role of the state becomes critical for promoting an ecosystem for transformative technologies.

Other demands: Creating an inclusive and accessible India will require behavioural changes, capacity building, investments in accessible infrastructure and inclusive and accessible innovations. This will help inform policies for the country's progress towards an equitable urban future.

6. [Narendra Modi's Deng Xiaoping moment](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**Narendra Modi's Deng Xiaoping moment**" published in "**The Indian Express**" on **13th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- Issues related to bilateral groupings and agreements

News- US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan's visit to Delhi this week is expected to finalise the agreements that are to be unveiled during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Washington on June 22.

What is the new economic policy of the US?

The US plans to **restructure the global economy**. The **new economic grand strategy** of the US questions globalisation.

Biden is committed to ensure that **foreign economic policy** serves the interests of the American people.

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The focus on **“economic security”** is central to Washington’s approach towards domestic manufacturing, international trade, technology coalitions, climate change, and multilateral development institutions.

This **geoeconomic agenda** reflects **geopolitical priorities** of the US. It is centred on **competing with China, rebooting traditional alliances, building new partnerships, and constructing new regional and global coalitions.**

How have Delhi and Washington overcome the geopolitical divergence in their bilateral relations in the second half of the 20th century?

There was **deep entrenched scepticism** within the strategic communities in both capitals.

India had **historic hesitations** in engaging with the US. Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) publicly discarded it when he last addressed the joint session of the US Congress.

One hesitation was related to India’s concerns about **America’s relationship with Pakistan.** Today Islamabad is marginal to the **American geopolitical calculus.**

In the 1990s, the **Indian security establishment** was deeply concerned about **US meddling in Kashmir** by the Bill Clinton administration. George W Bush took Kashmir off the agenda by ending the US activism on the question.

The **nuclear dispute** with the US was considered unresolvable since the early 1970s. Bush in 2005 altered the **US domestic law on nonproliferation** and signed a **nuclear deal.**

The US now has a **bipartisan consensus** on **China’s challenge** and limiting the possibilities for **Beijing’s hegemony over Asia.** This has coincided with the **growing Chinese threat** to India.

What is the future potential of a bilateral relationship between India and the US?

The US is eager to assist and benefit from India’s need to reduce its **massive reliance on Russian weapons.** Biden is now offering **US technology and capital** to expand and modernise India’s **defence industrial base.**

The challenge for Delhi and Washington now is to translate the **new geopolitical convergence into concrete outcomes.**

Today, the US is seeking India’s cooperation in restructuring the **global economic order** and making the world **less vulnerable to Chinese pressures.**

Unlike 1990s, India today is the **world’s fifth-largest economic entity.** For the first time since independence, India is able to shape the **global economic order.**

The current juncture could be seen as PM Modi’s **“Deng Xiaoping moment”.** Building on the **geopolitical convergence** with the US in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Deng rapidly transformed the Chinese economy.

The real challenge and opportunity today for India and the US lie in seizing the possibilities for **geoeconomic collaboration.**

It demands the kind of hard work that **bridged the geopolitical divide** between Delhi and Washington over the last three decades.

7. [Wrestlers' protest and the shrinking space for dissent](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Wrestlers’ protest and the shrinking space for dissent**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **13th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Pressure Groups and Formal/Informal Associations and their Role in the Polity.

Relevance– Issues related to social movements

News – Wrestlers protested for more than one month over the issues of sexual harassment by WFI President. It was recently called off after a meeting of protestors with union minister.

How Public protests have been a catalyst for social and policy change in India?

It has allowed individuals, classes and communities to **voice their grievances and advocate for their rights**.

Protests had opened space for a **new era of social activism** when the United Progressive Alliance government was in power.

What is the support base of current wrestler protest?

The protest has found **some support from civil society**, especially organisations representing workers, farmers, women, students, and youth. But it is **very small** when compared to other protests under this regime or previous ones.

These protests have failed to garner **significant support from the middle classes and women’s groups**.

The Indian women’s movement has had a long history of **organising around sexual violence** against women. They have in the past **organised direct action** on the streets.

But this time, except for Left groups and the All-India Democratic Women’s Association, women’s groups have been largely missing in action.

In the Nirbhaya case, mobilisation included civil society that included men. It is absent this time.

What is the nature of social activism by the middle class?

The **active participation of the middle classes** in the Anna Hazare Andolan and Nirbhaya protests led to **social activism** by this class.

The urban middle class favours **neoliberalism**. It has benefited from the opportunities available to it from the **neo-liberal economy** in the past three decades.

Middle-class expansion has occurred since economic reforms through the private sector boom powered by **economic liberalisation**.

This class supported ‘**India Shining**’, Manmohan Singh. It turned against the UPA when it introduced **rights-based legislations and other broad-based social policies**.

Their **shifting political loyalties** reflect an **ideological consistency**. The **middle-class opposition** to the UPA played a crucial role in discrediting it. Now, these classes strongly back the current dispensation even on issues of sexual violence.

Middle-class activism tends to prioritise the issues and concerns that directly impact them. It overlooks the **needs and struggles** of the disadvantaged classes and communities.

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What can be the impacts of social activism by the middle class?

The attitude of the middle class **perpetuates inequalities** and hinders efforts to address **broader social issues**.

It can result in a narrow understanding of **social reality and marginalised voices**. There is a sense of suspicion towards **mass politics and egalitarian ideas and movements**.

This tendency contributes to inactivity among the middle classes and even among the oppressed classes. It is emblematic of **society's normalisation of patriarchy and sexual harassment**.

8. [Same-sex marriage: Morality vs equality](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Same-sex marriage: Morality vs equality”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **13th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population. GS2- Judiciary

Relevance- Issues related to LGBT

News- Just a few days before the Supreme Court of India commenced hearings on the same-sex marriage issue.

What questions arise when SC follows a liberal approach in deciding the same-sex marriages?

The Court should be neutral on **moral questions** about the **desirability of marriage, meaning of marriage**. This neutrality is mandated by its **jurisprudence on equality for all** irrespective of social or personal morality.

Constitutional morality has been used by the Supreme Court in many cases to **maintain neutrality on moral issues**.

Following this neutrality would mean that **people's legal rights** are protected irrespective of the **societies' moral view**.

But to mandate the state to recognise a particular kind of marriage based on **equality** is to recognise marriage as a **social honour**. It would be violating the **liberal tenet of neutrality**.

As per **liberal theory, state intervention** in the matter is only the **second-best option**. The idea of liberalism is that the state should be neutral to moral concerns about institutions like marriage.

What is the basis of an equality based and privacy-based approach for deciding same sex marriages?

Citizens who see and value marriage as a **heterosexual institution** would be asked to recognise **same-sex marriages**, not as a matter of shared understanding but as a **duty we owe to strangers**.

If the matter were to be decided based on **“intrinsic value or social importance of the practice”**, one avoids the **alienation** that gives rise to **fundamentalist tendencies**.

What is the best way forward to decide about same-sex marriages?

Compared to **liberal court decisions imposed on a reluctant public**, ultimately sustainable decisions were forced on parties and electoral assemblies by **ad hoc citizens' assemblies in Ireland and the pressure of citizens' initiatives in Finland**.

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Ideally these questions should be **left for citizens' assemblies or citizens' initiatives** like in Ireland or Finland. In India, there is a need to look for equivalents. Reviving **Gandhi's "little republics"** could be a good starting point.

9. [Between India and Nepal, barriers come down](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Between India and Nepal, barriers come down**" published in the **Indian Express** on **13th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 2 – India and Neighbourhood relations.

Relevance: About India-Nepal relations.

News: The recent visit of the Nepali Prime Minister to India has highlighted the ongoing developments in India-Nepal relations.

What are the key decisions made during the recent visit?

Must Read: [India, Nepal sign pacts on energy, transport](#)

The decisions taken during the visit overcome the political and psychological barriers that have long hampered cooperation between the two countries.

What are the key discussions left out from the recent visit?

a) For the first time in recent years, the revision of the India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 was not raised, **b)** Earlier Nepal demanded turning the open border into a regulated one. But this visit did not pose such demands, **c)** In 2020, Nepal made a unilateral claim for nearly 350 sq km of territory in the Lipulekh area. This greatly enlarged the original 35 sq km of disputed territory in the upper reaches of the Kali River. This border issue was not also debated in the recent visit, and **d)** Recruitment of Nepali Gurkha soldiers by the Indian Army, in the wake of the Agnipath scheme, was also not part of the talks.

Note: *Nepal demanded the Gurkha recruits from Nepal shall be exempted from the four-year tenure laid down under the Agnipath scheme.*

All this shows a positive development in bilateral ties.

What are the recent developments in India-Nepal relations?

Must read: [Recent development in India – Nepal relations – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why does Nepal need India's assistance?

Read here: [India-Nepal relations soar high](#)

10. [Musings on the frictions in India-Canada ties](#)

Source– The post is based on the article "**Musings on the frictions in India-Canada ties**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **14th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings

Relevance- India and Canada bilateral relationship

News- During a pro-Khalistan parade on June 4 in Brampton, Canada, there was a tableau that depicted a lady clad in a white sari, who was bloodied, with two soldiers training their guns on her. The lady represented one of India's ex-Prime Minister.

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What is the role played by the Indian diaspora in Canadian domestic politics and how is it effecting India-Canada relations?

The **ethnic Indian community**, including the Sikhs, plays an important role in **Canada's public life**. There are currently **some ethnic Indians** in Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's cabinet.

At the press conference, Mr. Jaishankar indirectly mentioned Canada's indulgence of **Khalistani elements** and attributed it to **'vote bank' politics**.

Mr. Trudeau commented on farmers' agitation which was a purely **domestic Indian issue**.

Mr. Trudeau is critically dependent on the **New Democratic Party** for his government's survival. Jagmeet Singh, the NDP leader, is a committed **Khalistani sympathiser**.

He had also asked Mr. Trudeau to intervene in the events in Punjab surrounding **radical preacher Amritpal Singh's activities**.

What are the new Indian political class's approaches towards the diaspora which has gained political, financial and professional success in many countries?

It has become a **pillar of foreign policy**, especially in the present dispensation. It also used Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity with a vast section of the diaspora to impress **domestic public opinion**.

Wherever the diaspora is politically important, local politicians want to use Mr. Modi's popularity for their **political purposes**. The latest example is Mr. Modi's diaspora rally during his recent visit to Australia.

Following Mr. Modi's example, other Indian political players will also now play **diaspora politics**. The Congress's Rahul Gandhi's recent visit to the United States is a case in point.

11. Tax law in the shadow of the higher judiciary

Source– The post is based on the article **"Tax law in the shadow of the higher judiciary"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **14th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity – Functioning of judiciary

Relevance– Issues related to taxation laws

News – Over the course of the last 12 months, there have been instances where the Supreme Court of India has undermined the basic precepts of taxation, by reversing well-reasoned judgments of High Courts.

What are the two central precepts that are the basis of India's law of taxation?

First, on the idea contained in **Article 265 of the Constitution**. A tax may be imposed only with the **authority of law**.

Second, on a **principle of sureness**. Any levy ought to be **clear, consistent, and predictable**.

What are the recent instances where the Supreme Court of India has undermined the well-established principles of taxation?

ITO vs Vikram Sujitkumar Bhatia case–

The provision at stake is **Section 153C of the Act**. It stipulates the conditions under which a search made on a person's premises could result in the **opening of proceedings** against other persons and entities.

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Before an amendment to the law in 2015, Section 153C allowed the Revenue authorities to proceed against third parties to a search, if material seized **belongs to a third party**.

The law was amended in 2015. Section 153C now stipulated that assessments could be made against third parties to a search, even if the material seized **pertains to the person** or if information contained in those items **relates to the person**.

Gujarat High Court held that the amendment was not **expressly retrospective**. Such an application would impact the rights that had vested on persons by earlier provisions of the law.

The Supreme Court reversed this verdict by finding the new law **declaratory**. SC stated that it seeks to explain an earlier provision. Hence, it is **retrospective**.

Union of India vs Ashish Agarwal case–

The Court revived **notices of reassessment** that had been issued by the Revenue without any **sanction of law**. It reversed the Allahabad High Court’s judgement.

The issue at stake in the case was simple. With effect from April 1, 2021, Parliament had enacted a new regime to **govern reassessments** of completed income-tax proceedings.

But, despite the change in law, the Revenue continued to issue notices under a repealed provision. It derives authority from **executive notifications** that extended timelines during the COVID-19-inflicted period.

The High Courts declared these notices invalid. SC revived these quashed notices. Through this, the Court was encroached in the **legislative domain**. Court also invoked its power under **Article 142 of the Constitution**.

Article 265 of the Constitution forbids **taxation without legislation**. However, the Supreme Court’s willingness to encroach in Parliament’s domain, goes against this provision.

12. Where anyone can be accused of sedition

Source– The post is based on the article **“Where anyone can be accused of sedition”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **14th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Criminal Justice System

Relevance- Issues related to law having chilling impacts on fundamental rights

News– The 279th Law Commission Report, laid down the grounds for retaining sedition.

Must read – [Law Commission’s recommendations on sedition and its relevance – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the significant recommendations of the Commission?

Section 124A of the IPC should be amended to incorporate the meaning of sedition which was laid down by the Supreme Court in **Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar** in 1962.

The **minimum sentence should** be increased from three to seven years.

FIR in sedition cases should be registered only after a police officer, holding the rank of an Inspector or higher, makes a **“preliminary enquiry”**.

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What is criticism against the recommendations by the Commission?

Tendency jurisdiction– The Commission claims that only those **forms of expressions** will be penalised which have a **tendency to incite violence**. “Tendency” means mere **inclination to incite violence** rather than **proof of actual violence or imminent threat to violence**.

The proposed amendment will not fundamentally alter the **meaning of sedition**.

Tendency’ is a **vague term**. It brought expressions which have no direct connection with **public disorder** under the ambit of law. The **‘tendency’ jurisprudence** is an **ambiguous standard** for any judicial and executive.

Police enquiry– The Commission has proposed that the police should conduct a **preliminary enquiry**.

This is an even more **ambiguous standard**. Police have to now judge a particular act on mere **inclination to violence**. **No proof of violence or even actual threat to violence** is needed.

It paves the way further for **more police power**, especially where the FIR is the result of complicity with persons who have **local, state, or national political clout**.

Ground realities– The Commission also disregarded developments in **foreign jurisdictions** which have invalidated sedition laws. It has stated that the **“ground realities”** are different in other countries. In fact, it turns a blind eye to the **ground realities in India**.

The Supreme Court in 2021 admitted multiple petitions challenging the **constitutionality of Section 124A** due to confusion caused by the **Kedar Nath Singh** precedent.

Emphasis on colonial legacy– The Commission cites continuities from colonial times, such as the civil services and the police system, to **justify sedition**.

It fails to distinguish ‘colonial’ as a merely **historical category from a political system** impacted by **domination, violence and inequality**.

[13. Why every Indian must learn about evolution](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Why every Indian must learn about evolution”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **14th June 2023**.

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

Relevance- Issues related to curriculum

News– Textbooks published NCERT books for middle and high school classes in India have omitted some chapters. Among the most noticeable are the chapters on evolution and the chapter on the Periodic Table of Elements from the Class 9 and Class 10 science textbooks.

How there exists faith-based denial of Darwin’s theory of evolution across the world?

The creation of man by god has always been among the **most preserved beliefs** of several religions and religious societies.

Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Algeria and Oman **do not teach evolution** in schools or universities. In Egypt and Tunisia, evolution is taught but it is presented as an **“unproven hypothesis”**.

Some states in the United States had either **banned the teaching** of evolution or decided to teach it alongside “creationism”. Various judgements by the US supreme court blocked the **restrictions on teaching evolution**.

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Why is the teaching of Darwin theory of evolution important for India?

India is facing the challenges of **institutionalised caste and other forms of inequalities**. Teaching evolution from an early stage helps to shape **critical minds** and sharpen **arguments against institutionalised discrimination**.

It is important to read and understand the evolution of humans beyond the purview of **religious manuscripts**.

Why does the NCERT approach of post-Covid rationalisation of curriculum appear irrational?

First, the **teaching of evolution** will be limited now to students who **take up science** in Class 11. The **75th round of NSSO data** shows that 74% of the population, 18 years and above, dropped out of school before reaching Class 12.

Many young students could lose an opportunity to study evolution after the **NCERT's rationalisation exercise**.

Teaching evolution to primary or secondary school children is about more than **imparting scientific knowledge**. It is part of the **holistic scientific development** of children.

Learning about the basics of evolution broadens the **horizon of children** to understand the **process of life beyond the socio-religious sphere**. It generates ideas and **enhances rational thinking**. It imparts the **ability to question the status quo**.

Science helps society by asking **uncomfortable questions** about itself and initiating debates.

In a consumerist world, nations work through **optics**. The government wants to appear good to the rest of the world. Therefore, the deletion of evolution from school textbooks is **bad optics**. Nature has done an editorial on the **rationalisation exercises**. It notes that in recent times India is taking pride in its **ancient knowledge**.

14. [Male-centric medicine is affecting women's health](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Male-centric medicine is affecting women's health**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **15th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues related to development and management of health. GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance- Issues related to medicine field

News- The male model of medicine is thriving. There is the tendency of treating women as smaller men despite a growing body of research insisting on physiological differences.

What shows the prevalence of male model of medicine?

In India, the gender disparity in clinical trials has even bigger implications due to generic drug production and consumption. It has been demonstrated in various studies that women's bodies respond differently to the components of generic drugs.

The recent inclusion of women in **clinical trials for generic medicine** shows the male model of medicine. Nearly **one-fifth of medications** showed a difference in the **active dose** between men and women. Women have been either **overdosing or not getting enough** for decades.

In **testing and diagnosis**, the **specific concerns of women** are not taken care of. Take the example of mental health mental health.

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According to a study conducted in Tamil Nadu, **26% of men and 31% of women aged 61-70** have symptoms indicating a high **likelihood of depression**.

The study firmly notes that **depression rates and the prevalence of anxiety** are higher for women than for men worldwide in general.

Cardiac issues are now acknowledged as having a slightly **more prevalence** in women. Yet, they continue to be diagnosed and treated like 'lesser men'.

Study after study demonstrates that women are less likely to receive **appropriate medications, diagnostic tests and clinical procedures** even in developed countries such as Canada and Sweden.

What are the impacts of domination of male model in medicine?

The exclusion of women from clinical trials and research projects addressing **sex-agnostic critical illnesses** has resulted in a limited understanding of **sex-specific symptoms and responses** to treatment.

In case of **sex-specific illnesses** such as breast or endometrial cancers, polycystic ovarian syndrome, and pregnancy-related issues, there are **serious gaps in research**.

United States-based studies show that the funding received for **research in migraine, endometriosis and anxiety disorders** is much lower in proportion to the burden of these illnesses.

WHO data from 2017 show that every day about 808 women die due to **complications of pregnancy and childbirth**. Almost all of these were **preventable**. Pregnant women are **underrepresented in clinical trials and research**.

What should be the priority of India in this matter?

It is time for **policy intervention** in the space of **sex-specific research** in medicine and the implementation of outcomes.

India's G-20 presidency may be an opportune time to highlight this issue in alignment with Sustainable Development Goals on women's health.

15. Why Delhi and Tamil Nadu colleges lead the way

Source– The post is based on the article **“Why Delhi and Tamil Nadu colleges lead the way”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **15th June 2023**.

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

Relevance- Issues related to ranking of educational institutions

News– The 2023 NIRF rankings have recently been announced.

What are the criteria used by NIRF rankings?

The NIRF uses five **broad heads of teaching, learning and resources; research and professional practice; graduation outcomes; outreach and inclusivity and perception**. There are **variables under each head**.

In the scores, if there is a **significant difference** between higher education institutions, **tinkering with the methodology** won't change relative rankings. But yes, if the difference is slight, a **change in methodology** can make differences.

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What are some key takeaways from the survey?

The ranking exercise for the year 2023 continues with the practice of providing a **common 'overall' rank** in addition to a separate rank for universities, research institutions, degree colleges, and **discipline-specific ranks**.

Agriculture and allied sectors and innovation are two verticals added to the ranking exercise from 2023 onward.

In the list of best-100 colleges, **Miranda College in Delhi** University tops the list, followed by **Hindu College** in the same university. Both are old colleges. Miranda was established in 1948, and Hindu in 1899.

PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, in Coimbatore is ranked fourth among colleges. This college was established in 1963.

The worst among the list of best-100 colleges is **Scottish Church College**, in Kolkata. The history of Scottish Church College goes back to 1830. The alumni include Swami Vivekananda, Paramahansa Yogananda, Subhas Chandra Bose.

Scottish Church College has a **proud legacy**. That's **no guarantee of a proud present**.

The brilliant past is **no guarantee of success**. New entrants are challenging the **old order**.

In that list of top 100 colleges, there is a **clear concentration in Delhi and Tamil Nadu** (Chennai, Coimbatore).

How can inclusion be interpreted with rising urbanisation?

It is not about **establishing colleges** in rural areas. Inclusion can be **ensured by access** for students in **centres of higher education** that have **positive externalities**.

A Geographic centre should not be interpreted as an **individual HEI** alone, but as a **cluster of HEIs**. That is probably happening in and around Delhi and Tamil Nadu.

16. Strengthening the ICDS Scheme

Source: The post is based on the article "**Strengthening the ICDS Scheme**" published in **The Hindu** on **15th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

Relevance: About the performance of ICDS.

News: India's high prevalence of stunting, wasting, and anaemia continues to pose public health risks for children and women. So, India must strengthen its existing social sector schemes, such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).

What is Integrated Child Development Services?

Read here: [Integrated Child Development Services \(ICDS\)](#)

The ICDS targets children aged 0-6 years, pregnant women, and lactating mothers; addresses non-formal preschool education; and breaks the cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, and mortality.

What are the findings of various studies on the performance of ICDS?

Various studies have shown that **a)** Interventions focusing on nutrition, education, and health during early childhood like ICDS can significantly improve human capital, particularly in

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developing countries, **b)** The ICDS have a positive impact on cognitive achievements, especially among girls and those from economically disadvantaged families, **c)** Children who were exposed to ICDS during the first three years of life completed 0.1-0.3 more grades of schooling than those who were not, **d)** Adolescents aged 13-18, who born in villages with proper ICDS implementation, showed a 7.8% increased likelihood of school enrolment and completed an average of 0.8 additional grades compared to their peers who did not have access to the ICDS.

Why ICDS needs a relook?

Despite four decades of persistent efforts, **a)** The ICDS still faces the herculean task of ameliorating the nutritional and health outcomes for children aged 0-6 years, **b)** Anganwadi workers are frequently stretched beyond their limits. For instance, their roles vary widely from employing modern technology, like smartphones and applications, to practical tasks such as delivering health education, managing feeding programmes, and intermediate with auxiliary nurse midwives and other healthcare professionals, **c)** There is a significant variation in the implementation of the ICDS and the level of skills of Anganwadi workers, and **d)** Anganwadi worker recruitment falls under the jurisdiction of State governments.

Must read: [Child Mortality in India: Status, Challenges and Way Forward – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why India should empower Anganwadi workers to strengthen ICDS?

India should take efforts to empower Anganwadi workers because **a) It would lead to better health and educational outcomes:** For example, a study from Tamil Nadu shows that the addition of a half-time worker effectively doubled the net preschool instructional time, which led to improvements in math and language test scores for children enrolled in the programme, **b)** Children can exhibit **reduced rates of child stunting and severe malnutrition**, **c) It is easy to implement and have significant benefits**, **d)** New Anganwadi worker can be given the responsibility of concentrating only on preschool and early childhood education, This would allow existing workers to dedicate more time to child health and nutrition, and **e) It will create job opportunities** for local residents, particularly women (can create 1.3 million new jobs for women).

To unlock the ICDS' full potential, revisiting and re-evaluating its strategies and implementation is essential. Empowering Anganwadi workers is just a start.

[17. Is the ranking system of colleges flawed?](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **“Is the ranking system of colleges flawed?”** published in **The Hindu** on **16th June 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Issues Related to Education**

Relevance: **concerns with NIRF rankings**

News: The 2023 National Institute of Ranking Framework (NIRF) rankings have recently been announced.

About the NIRF rankings

[Click Here to Read](#)

A significant portion of the ranking is focused on the research and professional practices component of the evaluation since they place a high value on bibliometric measurements.

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What are bibliometrics?

Bibliometrics refers to the measurable aspects of research, such as the number of papers published, the number of times they are cited, and the impact factors of journals.

The bibliometrics has been used as a measuring tool for assessing research due to its efficiency and convenience compared to qualitative assessments performed by subject experts, which are more resource-intensive and require time.

However, science policy experts have cautioned authorities against relying too much on bibliometrics as a complete assessment.

What is the issue with overly relying on bibliometrics?

Bibliometric indicators don't fully capture the complexities of scientific performance, and there is a need for a more comprehensive evaluation methodology.

Further, **the NIRF rankings have faced criticism regarding the effectiveness** and fairness of its approach to ranking universities.

The NIRF relies on commercial databases like **'Scopus' and 'Web of Science'** to obtain bibliometric data, but these databases are not immune to inaccuracies or misuse.

Moreover, **the NIRF's publication-metrics indicator only considers research articles**, neglecting other valuable intellectual contributions such as books, book chapters, monographs, and non-traditional outputs.

As a result, the NIRF indirectly encourages researchers to prioritize work that is more likely to be published in journals, particularly international journals.

These hampers work that focuses on national and local issues, as international journals prefer work on topics of global significance.

Must Read: [Why Delhi and Tamil Nadu colleges lead the way](#)

Is the NIRF transparent?

University rankings, including NIRF, Times Higher Education World University Rankings, and QS World University Rankings, have generated controversy due to their flaws.

The NIRF is partly transparent as it publicly shares its methodology, but it doesn't provide a detailed view.

The framework for assessment and scoring is based on bibliometric data. However, there are issues with how they define and evaluate research quantity and quality.

What can be the way ahead?

Due to the flaws present in the NIRF ranking, the emphasis on its rankings can foster unhealthy competition among universities and prioritizing metrics over the actual goal of measuring excellence in education and research.

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18. [Jumpstarting the next phase of U.S.-India defence ties](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Jumpstarting the next phase of U.S.-India defence ties” published in “The Hindu” on 16th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- Issues related to India and US bilateral relationship

News- United States Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin travelled to India from June 4-5 to reinforce the major defence partnership and advance cooperation in critical domains.

What are key takeaways from the visit?

There was an agreement on a road map for **defence industrial cooperation**. It was announced as part of the **U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) agreement** announced in May 2022.

The road map envisages boosting defence manufacturing in India through **greater technological cooperation**. It potentially repositions the U.S. in the broader context of the **U.S.-India strategic relationship**.

A road map to **promote collaboration** in the defence industry was unveiled. The road map aims to expedite crucial **co-development and co-production initiatives**.

There was the launch of a new initiative, **Indus-X**. This builds on the **U.S.-India bilateral Space Situational Awareness arrangement** signed in 2022, which promises to enhance **information-sharing and cooperation** in the space sector.

New areas in **defence space exchanges** have been identified based on the cooperation between the U.S. Space Command and India’s Defence Space Agency.

Why is the defence partnership between India and the US important in the context of Indo-pacific?

During the **2+2 Ministerial Dialogue** in April 2022, the U.S. Defence Secretary referred to the **U.S.-India defence partnership** as the cornerstone of their **engagement in the Indo-Pacific**.

The combined threat assessments by India and the U.S. in the region point to China as a **common and most conspicuous challenge**.

China’s Military Power Report 2022 brought out by the U.S. states that the People’s Liberation Army Navy is the world’s largest navy by number of ships. The **subsurface presence** of China is likely to increase in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Why is industrial cooperation in the defence sector important for bilateral relationships?

A strong rationale for **broader industrial cooperation** between Indian and U.S. companies in the defence sector is the **existing scale of American investments** in India. The U.S. government is exhorting its companies to support India’s defence modernisation.

In the long run, this could lead to growth of an **ecosystem of joint ventures** between companies. The U.S. can gain a larger share in the **Indian defence manufacturing**. **Co-development and co-production** by both will be achieved.

American companies led by Boeing, Lockheed Martin, BAE Systems, Honeywell Aerospace, Raytheon, are partnering with Indian companies in the defence sector.

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These are likely to be supplemented by linking **defence start-ups** from both countries through an **'innovation bridge'** that was announced in the **iCET agreement**.

19. [How India's G20 presidency can address global hunger](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "How India's G20 presidency can address global hunger" published in "The Indian Express" on 16th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues related to poverty and hunger

Relevance- hunger related challenges at global level and India role in ending it

News- The G-20 ministerial meeting on agriculture will take place in Hyderabad.

What are the challenges faced by the international community on the hunger front?

For the first time in decades, there is a rising number of **hungry people**. This is despite the fact that the world produces **enough food to feed 10 billion people**.

Today, more than **800 million people** sleep hungry. Many of them are **small-scale farmers** who produce one-third of the world's food.

Hunger is rural. Three-fourths of the world's **poorest and food insecure** live in rural areas. Rural economies, specifically agriculture, have suffered from **chronic under-investment**.

Low- and middle-income countries are increasingly indebted. **Global inflation and local currency depreciation** is creating issues in financing their **development and climate action**.

Donor support for agriculture has stagnated at **4-6% of total official development assistance** (ODA) for at least two decades. After peaking at US\$10.8 billion in 2020, it fell 10% to US\$9.9 billion in 2021.

Estimates suggest that there is a need **for US\$300-400 billion annually** until 2030 to transform food systems. So investment needs to grow at least 30 times.

Why is investment in rural agriculture a win-win situation for both governments and companies?

For governments, boosting **local production, local food chains and local markets** means **global food security, jobs and less conflict**. It will also mean **lower GHG emissions**.

For the private sector, investing in small-scale farmers is beneficial. **Production costs** are low, **returns on capital** are high. Farmer organisations and cooperatives have shown they can achieve **economies of scale**.

These investments can build **long-term resilience** and reduce the impact of climate change and other shocks.

Every US\$1 spent on resilience saves up to **US\$10 in emergency aid** in the future. Investing in agriculture is at least 2-3 times more **effective in reducing poverty** than investment in other sectors.

Why does India's G-20 presidency assume critical importance in tackling the challenges related to hunger?

India's G-20 presidency assumes critical importance in mobilising resources. It can ensure that every person has access to **affordable, safe, sufficient and nutritious food**.

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It can be done by increasing **digitisation**, making **insurance attractive** for farmers and insurers, providing **access to easy and discounted loans**, **securing land rights** and strengthening farmers' organisations.

India is a crucial partner in the mission to **end rural poverty and hunger**. Leveraging the panchayat system, India has successfully built **robust community institutions**. They have strengthened **people's ability** to manage their own development.

These experiences are an inspiration for countries attempting to become **food secure**. India has shown thoughtful leadership in advancing **South-South and triangular cooperation**. This has only deepened with its **increasing economic weight**.

The Indian presidency has committed to depoliticise the **global supply of food, fertilisers and medical products**, so that **geopolitical tensions** do not lead to **humanitarian crises**.

20. [Code red: The push for a uniform civil code should not become a divisive tool](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Code red – The push for a uniform civil code should not become a divisive tool**" published in **The Hindu** on **16th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Constitution—significant provisions and basic structure.

Relevance: About Uniform Civil Code.

News: Recently, the Law Commission has sought a fresh public view on implementing Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India.

About the Law Commission's view on UCC

The 21st Commission released a consultation paper in 2018 that categorically said a uniform civil code was "neither necessary nor desirable" at that stage. The commission is against the attempt to bring about uniformity in the laws governing various religions. Instead, the commission demanded focussed initiatives to reform the various personal laws for the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

But the 22nd law panel has claimed that years have elapsed, and a fresh effort was needed to garner varied opinions.

What is the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)?

Read here: [Explained | The Uniform Civil Code](#)

What are the status and judicial views on implementing UCC in India?

Must Read: [The Debate on Uniform Civil Code – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the view of the constituent Assembly on implementing UCC?

Read here: [A detached approach is crucial for a uniform civil code](#)

What should be done?

A uniform code may be adopted without offending any religion, but the concept evokes fear among sections of minorities that their religious beliefs. This is because their source, personal laws, may be undermined. A common code will inevitably be seen as an imposition by the majority. So, India should

Prioritise basic reforms. Such as, **a)** Having 18 as the marriageable age for all across communities and genders, **b)** Introducing a 'no-fault' divorce procedure and allowing the

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dissolution of marriage on the ground of irretrievable breakdown, and **c)** Having common norms for post-divorce division of assets.

Pursue community law reforms: Within each community's laws, the government should first incorporate universal principles of equality and non-discrimination and eliminate practices based on taboos and stereotypes.

21. Culture shift: UNESCO must act on nations exiting, re-entering on frivolous grounds

Source: The post is based on the article “**Culture shift: UNESCO must act on nations exiting, re-entering on frivolous grounds**” published in **The Hindu** on **16th June 2023**

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

Relevance: About the US rejoining UNESCO.

News: The United States has recently said that it will rejoin the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The US rejoining might bring in at least \$600 million in outstanding dues to UNESCO.

Note: *The Reagan administration withdrew from UNESCO in 1984 citing various reasons including the “advancing Soviet interests”.*

About US withdrawal and reason for rejoining UNESCO

The Obama administration in the US ceased funding UNESCO in 2011. Later in 2017, the US withdrew from the organisation. This is due to “an anti-Israel bias” and it alleged UNESCO has some favourable towards Palestine.

The reason for the U.S.'s return is China. According to the US, the U.S.'s absence had helped China gain “more influence” in setting the rules around artificial intelligence and the ensuing technological shifts. Thereby China has gained significant developments in AI.

Why US is worried about Chinese advancement in AI?

Product patents and their enforcement have helped countries such as the U.S. to maintain their edge. But with AI, China made significant developments due to advantages like a much larger population and a more powerful surveillance state. This is visible from China's increasing product patents and research publications.

About the US's ‘America First’ policy decision on International forums

During the pandemic, in 2020, the U.S. withdrew from funding the World Health Organization. This is because of WHO's ‘inadequate’ response time to the gravity of the pandemic originating in China. Later following political change, the US rejoined WHO.

Similarly, the US withdrew from the Paris Agreement and later rejoined after political change.

What should be done?

It is high time that countries such as India should point out **a)** to make stricter provisions for countries exiting and entering on frivolous grounds, and **b)** to frame policies and research that accommodate the political tussles in a hyper-connected world.

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22. [Hotspot Minsk – Russia’s likely delivery of tactical nukes to Belarus will set a dangerous, destabilising global precedent](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Hotspot Minsk – Russia’s likely delivery of tactical nukes to Belarus will set a dangerous, destabilising global precedent**” published in **The Times of India** on **16th June 2023**

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

Relevance: About Russia – Belarus nuclear deal.

News: Belarus will be taking delivery of Russian tactical nuclear warheads soon. This represents a serious blow to the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

About Russia – Belarus nuclear deal

It was announced in March against the backdrop of the Ukraine war. Belarus has served as a launchpad for Russian troops. Hence, both nations signed a deal to transfer the nukes.

Both nations said that the move is in response to growing Western “threats” and might lead to the deployment of US nuclear weapons across Nato bases in Europe since the 1950s.

About US nuclear warheads in Europe

The US nuclear warheads in countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Turkey are kept in vaults with the US keeping the Permissive Action Link codes to arm them. Now, these deployments are considered a legacy of the Cold War and represent no change in the security posture of the host nations.

What are the challenges in Russia – Belarus deal for the globe?

a) Though Russia said it will retain control of the deployed nukes, there is no guarantee, **b)** Belarus is an autocratic state. So, the state wouldn’t hesitate to use the nukes in case of aggression against it, **c)** The transfer is taking place when Russia and Belarus are active participants in an ongoing war. This has the potential to create catastrophic consequences for the world. For instance, the US including Taiwan under its nuclear umbrella or stationing nukes in Taiwan could dramatically change security equations in East Asia.

What should be done?

The world should preserve the post-Cold War nuclear arms control architecture. India and China, which already disapproved the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine, should ask Russia to stop the transfer of nukes.

23. [Paying for a safety net](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Paying for a safety net**” published in **Business Standard** on **17th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

Relevance: concerns with freebies

News: Government and politicians are now moving with the old approach to gain votes because economic reforms have failed to achieve the desired results.

What old approach is being adopted by the government?

The government is moving towards the old approach of offering subsidies and cash incentives. This strategy has proven effective in past elections.

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For instance, M G Ramachandran expanded a limited programme of free midday meals in schools.

This improved nutrition, better school attendance, and therefore improved literacy, even a lower birth rate. It is now a nationwide programme.

Similarly, the ruling party in recent years has adopted a strategy due to the failure of its macro promises like doubling farmers' incomes, or a \$5 trillion economy.

As a result, **it has emphasized its own welfare initiatives, including** cash payments to farmers, free foodgrain, free toilets, housing subsidies, and free medical insurance.

Even the Congress has copied the Aam Aadmi Party in the recent Karnataka election by promising monthly payments to jobless diploma-holders and graduates, financial assistance to female heads of households, free electricity, and free grain.

Why are the governments moving towards offering freebies?

Offering freebies attract votes. Freebies are being looked at as an alternative to job creation, improvement in education, etc. This approach serves as a way for the democratic system to manage economic distress and social unrest.

Therefore, India is moving in an unplanned and haphazard way towards setting up a social safety net, with the free provision of grain and medical insurance; public works programmes to create work, etc.

What are the concerns with freebies?

[Click Here to Read](#)

What can be the way ahead?

Freebies raises the question of whether India is building a productive economy substantial enough to generate the necessary tax revenue to sustain a welfare system.

This is because **the tax-to-GDP ratio has shown little improvement** despite a significant increase in per capita income over the past three decades. This in turn has increased public debt, consuming around 40% of tax revenue.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for public debate on this central political-economy question. The NITI Aayog or a private think tank should take the lead.

General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. [Monetary policy: Global and local](#)

Source: This post has been created based on the article “Monetary policy: Global and local”, published in Business Standard on 12th June 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – growth and development of Indian Economy

Context: The article discusses the recent developments in the monetary policies of the US Federal Reserve (the Fed) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the context of global events.

US Fed’s tightening and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has a big impact on the world economy. In 2021, the Fed had to deal with a big inflation problem. It increased interest rates 10 times from March last year to between 5 and 5.25%. At the same time, Russia invaded Ukraine. These two events had a big impact on the world economy, affecting everything from start-ups and cryptocurrencies in India to the global energy market.

What are its impacts on India?

In India, actions by the Fed and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have slowed down the economic growth that followed Covid-19.

Inflation in India has dropped a lot over the year and is now close to the target of 4%.

What are the future projections for India’s growth?

The RBI has been successful in managing inflation by predicting future inflation and acting accordingly.

If global food prices don’t rise too much because of the problems with Ukrainian food exports, the RBI might be able to act quickly to keep inflation below 4%.

If the Fed increases interest rates and the RBI doesn’t, the Indian rupee might lose value. This could help the Indian economy by making imported goods more expensive and Indian exports cheaper.

2. [Manipur, a rude reminder of northeast tensions](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Manipur, a rude reminder of northeast tensions**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on **12th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance- Issues related to security in northeast region

News– Violence in Manipur has been going on for over a month now. It has claimed well over 100 lives and displaced thousands more.

How is the northeast still a divided region?

There has been **improved communications, better transit facilities, and support for the special needs** of the region. But there does still exist a **divide between the tribes and plains people** within the region.

In the northeast, there is the presence of **ethnic sub-nationalism and identity politics** in an aggravated form. **Ethnic allegiance** had been in conflict with **mainstream nationalism**. **Ethnic identities** still overshadow all other considerations.

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Consolidation efforts by different tribal entities were resulting in **subterranean pressures**. The result is that many settled issues seem to have been reopened. This applies especially to Manipur.

What are some facts about conflict in Manipur?

The confrontation between **Meitei versus Kuki-Naga ultra-radicalism** needs to be viewed in the larger context of the conflict between the **plains Meiteis and the Kuki-Mizo-Chin-Zomi-Naga hill tribes**.

Meitei are seeking to **consolidate their position** within Manipur and across the region, in opposition to the Kukis, Mizos and other tribes.

The Meiteis may lack a **significant militaristic profile**. But, the Meiteis has developed a **strategy of networking** with other northeastern resurgent outfits, and with Maoist groups.

The polarisation between the Meitei, and the other tribal communities, in Manipur appears **irreconcilable**. **Relocation** of the two communities is taking place vigorously.

The demand for a **separate administration** as a prelude to the **division of the State** is currently gaining momentum.

What are the steps taken by the central government in the context of Manipur?

The Home Minister has announced a **judicial probe** into the ethnic violence and a **three-member committee** headed by a judge. He has proposed the creation of a **unified command** to oversee security in the State.

The announcement of a **Central Bureau of Investigation inquiry** into specific incidents of violence is a welcome measure.

The changing of the Director General of Police on grounds of **ineffectiveness** may heighten the gap between the Meitei and Kuki communities. He belongs to Kuki community

What are the steps needed to be taken by the central government to resolve the conflict? Northeast is still a **volatile region**. It is in the **process of changing**. The process of achieving a **proper equilibrium** requires both **sensitivity and 'out of the box' thinking**.

Centre needs an **'optimal positioning'** even if it may seem like giving far too many concessions. This demands **innovative thinking**.

Understanding **cultural factors** is critical. The Meitei versus Tribal divide is both a **cultural and sociological phenomenon**.

A solution demands a combination of **adjusting to realities**. There is a need to understand the **moral imperatives** of the numerous tribal communities in the northeast.

The region is home to different cultures often confronting each other. Delhi has consistently avoided an **adversarial policy**. It has **sought dialogue**. This is still the **best remedy**.

All communities across the region **crave 'security'**. The impression that Delhi is **neutral in any conflict** must be **properly communicated**. Delhi should be seen to act based on **overreaching moral principles**.

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A solution to the Manipur conflict in quick time is important. Otherwise, it could aggravate **centrifugal tendencies** in the region.

3. [Look Deeper Into The Balasore Tragedy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Look Deeper Into The Balasore Tragedy**” published in **The Times of India** on **12th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Relevance: About making urban centres disable friendly.

News: Many of those who perished in the triple-train collision near Odisha’s Balasore, were migrant workers from West Bengal who were either heading to southern India to resume work or were travelling in search of jobs.

About the recent train accident and the issue of railway safety in India

Must read: [The Issue of Indian railway safety – Explained, pointwise](#)

About the Migrant workforce of India

Migrants were part of a 450-million workforce, contributing an estimated 10% to India’s GDP. According to the Census of India, 33 million people migrated for employment-related reasons in 2001, which further increased to 51 million in 2011.

A 2013 survey conducted by Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation shows 50.6% of Bengaluru’s population comprises migrants. Similarly, 62% of the entire 2.5 million migrant population of Kerala is accounted for by just four states – Bengal, Bihar, Odisha and Assam, with Bengal alone accounting for 20%.

Why there is an increased migration to southern India?

According to the Census of India (2011), between 2001 and 2011, nearly 5.8 lakh people migrated from Bengal to other states in search of work, with a large number moving to various cities and towns in southern India in view of the higher daily wages. For example, a bricklayer earns ₹1,200 a day in Kerala, the same job would fetch around ₹450 in rural Bengal.

According to the 2017 Economic Survey, Delhi, Maharashtra and Gujarat attracted a large number of migrants, mostly from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. A large number of these workers are employed in unorganised sectors.

Must read: [Migrant workers and their Social protection in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

So, the state governments should increase their ability to provide enough job opportunities to their domiciled resident.

4. [Ex-ante regulations can hurt the growth of India’s digital markets](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Ex-ante regulations can hurt the growth of India’s digital markets**” published in the **Livemint** on **12th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy.

Relevance: About ex-ante regulations for digital markets.

News: Last December, the Finance Committee Report on Digital Markets in India proposed ex-ante (before the event) regulations and a new digital competition law to curb anti-competitive practices in digital markets in India. Their purpose is to ensure fair competition and contestability. The report suggested ex-ante regulations as the competition policy alone is inadequate to address the challenges posed by digital markets.

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What are the challenges posed by implementing ex-ante regulations for digital markets?

Impact of ex-ante provisions in developed countries: Ex-ante provisions in Europe's Digital Services Act may result in sizable economic losses thereby offsetting gains from the free trade agreements.

Hinder innovation and growth: Regulators often lack business expertise and may disregard potential scenarios for the evolution of sectors and markets. This can stifle innovation and hinder the growth of the nascent digital ecosystem in India.

Issues with imposing fines based on the global revenues of companies: While large global corporations may have the resources to withstand such measures, smaller entities that are already financially strained may struggle to survive. Thereby, favours monopoly which is against the goal of the ex-ante regulations.

How India is ensuring consumer protection?

The government is leveraging the country's strong culture of innovation to empower more individuals with technology through the development of unique digital infrastructure. Initiatives such as the Open Credit Enablement Network (OCEN), Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) follows an ex-post approach to regulate fintech companies. Recently, RBI introduced a [regulatory sandbox](#). This approach facilitates innovation by tech firms while ensuring consumer protection.

A similar approach is being favoured by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

What should be done?

a) It is crucial to position the country as an attractive investment destination, **b)** A case-to-case ex-post analysis of the impact of innovations on competition is required, **c)** India should tap India's large startup ecosystem which presents vast potential, and **d)** The current culture of internet usage and technological advancements in the country is a result of collaborative efforts between the government and private players. This initiative needs to continue in the area of competition, which can be achieved through collaboration between the competition authorities, sectoral regulators and stakeholders.

5. [An Atmanirbhar move – on fertiliser sector](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “An Atmanirbhar move” published in the “The Indian Express” on 13th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure

Relevance- Issues related to fertiliser sector

News– The article highlights the progress achieved by current government in fertiliser sector.

How has India's department of fertilisers made significant strides in achieving self-reliance in the sector?

The government secured fertiliser supplies during the crisis precipitated by the Russia-Ukraine war. Despite facing challenges, the government has forged **long-term agreements** and created **joint ventures with resource-rich nations**.

It is supporting industry in **identifying opportunities** across the value chain by strengthening **domestic operations, building long-term partnerships, investing in resource-rich**

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geographies for securing raw materials and promoting alternate fertilisers and natural farming.

Industry has been encouraged to set up **overseas joint ventures** to secure raw materials. Joint venture plants have been set up in some countries with **buy-back agreements and assured off-take agreements.**

The government has also encouraged the domestic industry and public sector undertakings to sign **long-term agreements** for the import of raw materials such as ammonia, phosphoric acid, and sulphur.

These initiatives have enabled India to **diversify its product portfolio** and produce more NPK complexes. It offers not only a wider range of products to farmers but also ensures balanced nutrition.

There has been a **remarkable improvement** in the opening stocks of DAP, MOP and other NPK fertilisers in Kharif 2023. T

The Department of Fertilisers has positioned India as a **key player in the global fertiliser supply chain.**

6. [Seeds of stagnation in Bt cotton: Can newer variants impact productivity?](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article **“Seeds of stagnation in Bt cotton: Can newer variants impact productivity?”**, published in **Business Standard** on 13th June 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS paper 3 – Science and tech – GM Crops

News: GEAC is considering the genetically modified (GM) Bt cotton seed variant, Bollgard-2 Round-up Ready Flex (BG-2 RRF), for approval. It has asked for more information from the company.

In another case, GEAC approved field trials of a new variant of GM cotton by Bioseed Research India Pvt Ltd that has a gene resistant to pink bollworm.

What are the factors behind delay in approval to cotton seed variant?

Concerns about the efficacy of BG-2 RRF against targeted pests, including the pink bollworm.

Socioeconomic impact of its use.

Agriculture is a state subject. In case of bio seed research's GM cotton, some states have not given their approval for field test.

What are the effects of delay in approval?

Increase in the use of illegally manufactured and untested second-generation Bt cotton, which could be harmful to farmers' health and the soil.

The pink bollworm has developed resistance to Bt cotton, allegedly due to delays in allowing the growth of non-Bt cotton crops alongside Bt cotton to maintain resistance to new pests.

Cotton is grown in 12-12.5 million hectares in India. The pest can reduce seed cotton yields by 35 to 90% and degrade the quality of the cotton produced.

What should be done to save the crops from pink bollworms?

Disrupting the pest's mating cycle,

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Releasing sterile moths to control its reproduction, and

The extensive use of advanced varieties of Bt cotton seeds that are naturally resistant to pink bollworm.

7. [You, I, AI & GOI – on implication of generative AI](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “You, I, AI & GOI”, published in **The Times of India** on 13th June 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS paper 3 – Science and tech – GM Crops

Context: The article discusses the ongoing debate about the development and regulation of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has been advocating for AI development amidst global calls for a moratorium on the training of AI systems more powerful than GPT-4.

Generative AI systems like ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI are already used by hundreds of millions of people. It has demonstrated impressive skills in processing both text and images, scoring high on American Bar exams and medical assessment exams.

What are the Significances of Generative AI?

AI systems can significantly improve citizen-government interaction, education, and healthcare, especially in countries like India with limited access to qualified professionals.

In India, AI could help navigate bureaucratic procedures, provide high-quality medical advice, and assist with the resolution of the backlog of legal cases in India.

What are the concerns and challenges associated with Generative AI?

AI can be used to generate large-scale misinformation and may provide biased results, which are inherent in their training data.

Training of large AI models is expensive as it involves the use of specialized computer hardware called GPUs.

AI system can create outputs that are not necessarily aligned with the objectives of its human designers, which is a source of concern for many AI researchers.

Due to large training dataset, it is not yet possible to interpret and explain every aspect of how the AI model provides a certain output to a given input.

What should be the future course of action?

Smarter regulations are required to ensure the design of these AI systems are fair and transparent.

India should take the lead in developing and harnessing AI, given its potential to transform Indian society and economy.

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8. Will a hike in MSP help farmers?

Source: The post is based on the article “Will a hike in MSP help farmers?” published in **The Hindu** on **13th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

Relevance: About revamping MSP.

News: Recently, the Centre announced the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for this year’s summer (kharif) season crops. The price has been hiked between 5-10% from last season.

What is MSP?

Read more: [MSP \(Minimum Support Price\)](#)

About India’s foodgrain production

As per third advance estimates for 2022-23, total foodgrain production in the country is estimated at a record 330.5 million tonnes which is higher by 14.9 million tonnes compared to 2021-22. This is the highest increase in the last five years.

The total stocks of rice and wheat held by Food Corporation of India (FCI) and State agencies as on May 1, 2023, was 555.34 lakh tonnes.

What are the challenges faced in implementing MSP?

a) There are delays in establishing procurement centres, **b)** Farmers are exploited at the hands of commission agents. For instance, commission agents mostly buy the produce from farmers below the MSP, **c)** There is also a lack of awareness about the MSP among a large section of farmers, **d)** There is an absence of dependable or assured market mechanism for procurement-purchase of crops through MSP in most parts, and **e)** Only three to four crops (mainly wheat, paddy and cotton and at times some pulses), were being procured at MSP while the remaining crops were being procured at much below the MSP.

Non-implementation of MSP and below-MSP-procurement of a large number of crops has been one of the major hurdles in ‘crop diversification.’

What are the farmers’ opinion for revamping MSP?

a) According to the All India Kisan Sabha, the declared MSP is “unfair, belies the hopes of the farmers and inflicts huge losses in their incomes,” **b)** The Swaminathan Commission recommended MSP of C2+50% (C2 or comprehensive cost of production). But this remains unfulfilled, **c)** Farmers need to have an assurance that their crops will be purchased at the MSP to survive in the otherwise economically-unsustainable agricultural sector, and **d)** Farmers have been demanding a ‘legal status’ to the MSP.

What should be done?

The MSP attempts to strike a balance between the interest of growers and consumers. So, the government should **a)** Come up with a system to set up an ‘assured market mechanism,’ **b)** Focus on setting up an effective system to provide assured purchase and returns to farmers for all major crops at the MSP, and **c)** Procure all MSP defined crops. This would certainly bind the private players to procure those crops at least at the MSP. This will also increase crop diversification.

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9. [About India's Internet economy: Growth driver – Expanding internet economy will increase opportunities](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Growth driver – Expanding internet economy will increase opportunities**” published in the **Business Standard** on **13th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: About the report on India's Internet economy.

News: A research report titled “e-Conomy” makes startling projections about India's internet economy.

What is the Internet economy?

Must read: [Digital or Internet Economy](#)

About the e-Conomy report

Must read: [‘Internet economy to hit \\$1 trillion by 2030’](#)

-The report also estimates per capita income will rise from \$2,500 (2022) to \$5,500 (2030). Thereby doubling consumption.

-Per capita income in Tier-II cities and rural households (referred to as TII+) will grow 430% between 2019 and 2030.

– Business-to-consumer, or B2C, e-commerce will contribute about a third of the online economy's value by 2030.

What are the key takeaways from the report on India's Internet economy?

a) Enablers like the Aadhaar, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and Digilocker have laid the foundations for the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), Open Credit Enablement Network (OCEN), Unified Health Interface and the rapid development of the India Stack, or rather stacks, **b)** The willingness of TII+ residents to engage digitally provide more opportunity for high growth, **c)** Software as a service is expected to be a big export-growth area. For example, India is already looking to set up RuPay and UPI-style networks abroad. Six nations are already using the India Stack, and many more have expressed their interest in it, **d)** Multiple Indian unicorns (108 by the e-Conomy report's count) and many of the recognised start-ups could leverage their domestic experience to make a mark overseas, **e)** The report shows the amount of trust consumers placed in local non-celebrity influencers. As their trust has led to a shift in marketing spend, giving India's 80 million-plus content creators new revenue streams.

What India should do to leverage India's Internet economy further?

The emergence of India's Internet economy will also coincide with the emergence of unique imperatives across trust, security and responsibility. To combat these, collaborative efforts from India's policymakers and the private sector is necessary. Further, the government should create policies that will be supportive for the Internet economy,

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10. [A stunted middle class: Role of the manufacturing, informal sectors](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A stunted middle class: Role of the manufacturing, informal sectors**” published in **The Indian Express** on **14th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Growth & Development

Relevance: reasons behind stagnant middle-class population

News: The article explains about the problems persisting with the middle class in India.

Why isn't the middle class in India growing?

Employment in Informal Sector: The informal sector accounts for 90% of employment but generates only a third of the value added in the economy.

This sector faces numerous constraints, leading to limited efficiency and low productivity. Consequently, **it hampers the development of a genuine middle class in India.**

The informal workers either work as individual casual labour or in micro enterprises with very small operations with conditions of instability in both employment and income.

These conditions within the informal sector hinder the progress of informal workers in becoming part of the middle class.

Nature of Work in the Informal Sector: The nature of temporary work prevalent in the informal economy discourages employers from investing in productivity-enhancing tools and training workers to use them.

The informal sector not only hampers workers' access to better tools and learning opportunities but also denies them the benefits of teamwork.

Further, **even higher-skilled occupations like carpenters and tailors work independently** in digital aggregator platforms, which lowers the efficiency of workers.

As per the International Labour Organization (ILO), in 2017, **one-third of Indian workers in the informal sector were the so-called “own account workers”**, leading to low productivity in the informal sector.

Other Issues with the Informal Sector: Informal workers and micro enterprises also face problems in accessing finance which further hinders their growth.

The ratio of domestic credit to GDP, is far lower in India than China or the United States. It has also been stagnant for a decade, while it expanded in all the key economies in the world.

Underdeveloped Manufacturing sector: The stunted middle class in India is also linked to the underdeveloped manufacturing sector, which consists mostly of small and micro enterprises.

These lack efficiency required for growth and the creation of formal jobs.

The manufacturing sector in the post-World War II United States allowed individuals with a high school education or less to earn a middle-class income.

However, **manufacturing in India has not been able to achieve the same level of success thus far.**

Moreover, India has seen success in the IT sector, which can expand the middle class.

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Can the IT sector help in the expansion of the middle class in India?

According to NASSCOM, even when the IT industry is defined broadly, the total employment remains at 4.5 million, **which is very low compared to the large workforce of India.**

Even the rest of the service sector has not been able to create a large scale of jobs. The platform aggregators are also unlikely to create large scale jobs due to the nature of their business model.

What can be the way ahead?

The Indian economy **can either opt for a policy push** that delivers a large, vibrant and prosperous middle class, **or a business-as-usual growth** with a massive informal sector that increases consumption but does not create a genuine middle class.

However, **in order to rapidly expand India's genuine middle class, there is a need to create a large-scale manufacturing sector that can drive formal employment.**

11. IITs and the future of engineering: Why there's hope amid the gloom

Source: The post is based on the article "IITs and the future of engineering: Why there's hope amid the gloom" published in **The Indian Express** on **14th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Employment

Relevance: concern associated with employment in India

News: The director of IIT Madras has recently said in an interview that IIT graduates are not interested in taking core engineering jobs.

Should IIT graduates be allowed to take non-core jobs?

Even though society might not be ready to accept it, freedom should be given to the IIT graduates in pursuing their career choice.

Moreover, it is also a high salaried non-core jobs that attract the graduates.

Why are some non-core salaries so high for IIT graduates?

The optimistic answer is that core engineering education equips students with practical and transferable skills due to its emphasis on real-world applications, empirical truths, and attention to practicality.

This distinguishes it from non-core engineering disciplines (Physics, Economics) that may not have the same level of direct applicability and controlled experimentation.

However, **the pessimistic answer** is that employers only look for the tag of IIT and offer a high salary rather than looking at their education.

What is the current employment situation for other graduates in India?

There are many engineering colleges producing many engineering graduates in India every year.

Many graduates from these colleges have been dismissed as "unemployable".

However, even if these colleges make their graduates more employable, **there are not enough employers.** Further, non-engineers' graduates face more hurdles in getting employed.

Out of India's 140 crore people, only three crore report salary income in their tax returns.

How are employment conditions worldwide?

China: It has relatively few young people and proportionately fewer women. Hence, it has a smaller number of workforces requiring less jobs compared to India.

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Western Europe: In Western Europe, several native populations are declining, which will eventually lead to lower employment demands.

US: It allowed “practical training” wherein graduating foreign students were given a year to find work. This helped many people stay on permanently. That period of practical training is now three years for STEM graduates.

However, even in the US, the students have shifted from opting core engineering to learning newer topics like AI (artificial intelligence) and ML (machine learning).

Since these fields are new, it attracts funding for the universities and tends to create more jobs.

What lies ahead?

The population of China is declining while Brazilians are inefficient in speaking English language. This provides India’s next generation opportunity to opt for core engineering as rewarding career plan.

12. [Shelter From The Storm – As Biparjoy nears, note the quiet professionalism, also evident in Balasore, of India’s disaster management forces](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Shelter From The Storm – As Biparjoy nears, note the quiet professionalism, also evident in Balasore, of India’s disaster management forces**” published in **The Times of India** on **14th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster management.

Relevance: About India’s disaster management forces.

News: Due to India’s better disaster management in recent years, there’s little panic over the impact of cyclonic storm Biparjoy. Before the fall of Biparjoy, evacuation is nearly complete, shelter-food-medicine organised, and infrastructure too shored up as best can be.

Similarly, the first unit of Odisha’s rapid-responder team’s response to Balasore train tragedy has also limited the casualties.

How have India’s disaster management forces improved over time?

Odisha has been exemplary in training and equipping its disaster management authority. Odisha became India’s first to have such authority, it was set up after the 1999 supercyclone. Since then, it has engaged in countless missions including during floods and cyclones in Bengal and Andhra and up to Meghalaya to rescue miners.

Indian military’s relief work in large-scale disasters has helped India to work on disaster diplomacy. For example, in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia, India set up shelters and medical camps, supplied food and water, restored electricity and water supply, fixed bridges and so on. This approach is carried forward by NDMA and NDRF.

In Turkey, this February, NDRF and the Indian military formed the fourth largest contingent of the 80 nations on site after the temblor that killed over 50,000.

Read more: [India’s G20 presidency can show the way on disaster management](#)

What India should do?

With adverse climate events and humanitarian crises almost the new normal, rescue missions are set to increase within India and overseas. India should require benchmark response protocols

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and invest in rescue tech such as faster logistics, faster processing of passports etc to meet such requirements.

13. [The right incentive – PLI scheme alone would not be enough](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The right incentive – PLI scheme alone would not be enough**” published in the **Business Standard** on **14th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: About issues with PLI Scheme.

News: The government is planning to hold a first-of-its-kind meeting to address implementation issues being faced by producers under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme.

About the PLI Scheme

The government cleared the first three PLI schemes in March 2020, while another 10 were approved in November that year. The allocation for the scheme was announced in Union Budget 2021-22, with the idea of creating national manufacturing champions, which would generate employment opportunities.

Must read: [Production-Linked Incentive or PLI Schemes and its challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the challenges associated with the implementation of the PLI Scheme?

According to the latest numbers, the gross value added in manufacturing went up by just 1.3% at constant prices in 2022-23. This highlights that the schemes seem to have multiple issues. Such as,

Lack of clarity: In the auto industry, firms are looking for clarity on the incentives they are supposed to get. It has been reported that incentives could not be disbursed in 2022-23 because no auto company presented the required documents.

Lack of disbursements: Manufacturers are affected by disbursements in other sectors as well. For instance, in 2022-23, the government paid Rs. 2,874 crore to beneficiaries against a claim of Rs.3,420 crore. The outgo thus was about only 1.4% of the Rs. 1.97 trillion allocated for the scheme over a period of five years.

Aside from the documentation issues, the outgo has been low because the scheme has possibly not resulted in the kind of investment that was envisaged.

Affects competition: Investment and production in different sectors depend on a variety of factors. The state’s decision to select champions and provide fiscal incentives could affect competition. Like Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles scheme, manufacturers might use different ploys to take advantage of subsidies.

Read more: [An analysis of PLI \(production-linked incentive\) scheme – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done?

Policymakers should not excessively depend on the PLI scheme. It is not a way out of the inadequacies in the manufacturing sector.

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Modern manufacturing depends on complex supply chains and giving fiscal incentives to one set of producers may not work. So, the government will have to work on improving the overall industrial environment.

14. [How India can become a global maritime power by 2030](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**How India can become a global maritime power by 2030**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **15th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure

News– In the recently released World Bank’s Logistic Performance Index Report 2023, India has moved up to 22nd rank in the global rankings on the “International Shipments” category from the 44th position in 2014.

What are the reasons behind the improved performance in logistics?

There is a substantial reduction in the **dwelt time** at Indian ports. It is the amount of time vessels spend in port **actively loading or unloading** cargo.

This has reached an optimum level of **about three days** as compared to **four days** in countries like the UAE and South Africa, **seven days** in the US and 10 days in Germany.

India has done well in another parameter that measures **port operational efficiency**. The country’s **average turnaround time of only 0.9 days** is amongst the best in the world.

In Belgium, Germany, the UAE, Singapore, Malaysia, Ireland, Indonesia and New Zealand it is **1.4 days**, in the US **1.5 days**.

What are various achievements in the ports and shipping sector in the past few years?

There has been a consistent focus on improvements in **port efficiency and productivity**. **This is achieved** by **reforms, induction of new technologies**, a greater thrust on **public-private partnership** and commitment to the **ease of doing business**.

The capacity at 12 major ports in the country has increased from **871 million metric tonnes (MMT) in 2015 to 1,617 MMT in 2023**.

There has also been a nearly 150% increase in the value of **operationalisation of PPP projects** in the major ports. These PPP projects have contributed significantly to the increased operational efficiencies while adding nearly 300 MMT extra capacity.

The focus on decarbonisation in the maritime sector along with the Panchamrit commitments of the government has reflected in the port sector: There has been a 14-fold increase in the use of renewable energy in major ports over the last eight years.

The **Harit Sagar Green Port guidelines** issued by the government is another important step further in this direction. It aims to bring about a paradigm shift towards **safe, efficient and sustainable ports**.

The efficiency of ports has received a boost with the launch of the **National Logistics Portal (Marine)**. **It is** a single-window digital platform for all stakeholders like cargo services, carrier services, banking and financial services, and government and regulatory agencies.

This along with the **Sagar Setu app** facilitates **seamless movement of goods and services** in ports while substantially enhancing the **ease of doing business**.

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The Centre has also undertaken several **key policy and legislative reforms** to boost the port sector. This includes the **Major Port Authorities Act, 2021** which grants greater **autonomy to major ports**.

The **Marine Aids to Navigation Act, 2021** provides for **increased safety and efficiency** in vessel **traffic services and training and certification** at par with international standards.

The **Indian Vessels Act, 2021** brings uniformity in **law and standardised provisions** across all inland waterways in the country.

The government is also in the process of replacing the **Indian Ports Act, 1908** with a piece of legislation that is in tune with **present-day requirements**.

15. The next Finance Commission will have a tough task

Source– The post is based on the article “**The next Finance Commission will have a tough task**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **15th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government budgeting

Relevance– Issues related to taxation laws

News- The government will appoint a Finance Commission in the next few months to determine how much of the Centre’s tax revenue should be given away to States and how to distribute that among States.

What are issues related to horizontal distribution by the Finance Commission?

Terms of reference– Finance Commission in 2017, considered the **2011 population figures** in determining the **expenditure needs** of a State. This was a departure from the standard practice of using the **1971 population numbers**.

States which had done well in **stabilising population growth rates** protested against this change in the base year. They called it a ‘**penalty for good performance**’.

Revenue deficit– The rationale for revenue deficit grants is that every State should be able to provide a **minimum level of service** to its residents even if it involves **cross-subsidisation**.

This has become a **perverse incentive** for states. States do not make efforts to raise revenues on their own because the Finance Commission **compensates them**.

Finance Commissions have struggled to determine how much a state’s deficit is due to its **fiscal incapacity** and how much is due to **fiscal irresponsibility**.

Division among states– These fault lines across States have deepened in recent years along **political, economic and fiscal dimensions**.

Southern States of the country are doing better in terms of **infrastructure, private investment, social indicators and the rule of law**. It has widened the **north-south gap**.

The nature of **horizontal distribution** is such that richer States **compensate** poorer States. There is a need to ensure that this happens without **deepening the divide**. It creates a challenge for the government in defining the **terms of reference** of the Finance Commission.

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What should be the focus area of the next Finance Commission?

Cess and Surcharges– Centre is increasingly resorting to a **levy of cesses and surcharges** rather than raising taxes. Proportion of cesses and surcharges in the Centre's total tax revenue had nearly doubled from 10.4% in 2011-12 to 20.2% in 2019-20.

The Constitution was amended in the year 2000, it gave States a share in the **Centre's total tax pool**. The implicit understanding was that the Centre will resort **only sparingly** to cesses and surcharges, and not as a **matter of routine**.

As a result of this breach, States have felt cheated out of their **legitimate share of national tax revenue**.

The next Finance Commission should lay down guidelines for when **cesses and surcharges** might be levied. It should suggest a formula to cap the amount that can be raised.

Freebies– The Finance Commission should look at the **government spending on freebies**. All political parties are guilty on this count.

The restraints imposed by the **FRBM Act** should have acted as a check on such **populist spending**. But, governments have found ways of **raising debt** without it appearing in the budget books.

The next Finance Commission should lay down guidelines on the **spending on freebies**.

[16. Why approval for Elon Musk's Neuralink for humans is a bad idea](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Why approval for Elon Musk's Neuralink for humans is a bad idea"** published in **The Indian Express** on **15th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: About Brain-Computer Interface (BCI)

News: The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted approval to Neuralink, a neurotech startup co-founded by Elon Musk, to conduct clinical trials on a Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) implant for humans.

About Neuralink's BCI

Neuralink aims to address brain disorders and eventually merge human consciousness with artificial intelligence (AI).

The company hopes to build a surgically implantable chip containing several electrodes that allows the brain to convey intent of movement to a device connected via Bluetooth and then the device decodes the neural data and converts intent to action.

Despite the claims made by Neuralink about its Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) technology, **it lacks transparency and concrete evidence to support its claims**.

Moreover, there are several major safety and viability concerns with Neuralink.

What are the concerns with Neuralink's device?

Lack of Reliable Data: One of the major problems with Neuralink is the lack of published data supporting its technology.

Only one article has been published by the company which described the chip and the surgical implantation process, accompanied by a single image of a rodent with the implant.

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However, before a device is approved for use in humans, its feasibility and safety parameters need in-depth pre-clinical assessment in more mammals such as pigs, sheep and monkeys.

Dependence on the Existing Technology: Most of Neuralink's work depends upon existing research in the field.

For instance, it has increased data collection, by implanting 3,000+ electrodes in comparison with 256 electrodes that have been done previously.

This may provide the desired increase in speed and accuracy comparable to real-time movement.

Safety of Materials: The safety of the materials used in the implants is a major concern, considering the invasive surgical procedure.

Further, it is crucial to ensure the materials are truly inert and stable, even with surface coatings. It is also required to investigate any potential leaching of harmful chemicals into the brain over time.

Another concern is the **use of thin wires**, which may result in higher resistance and susceptibility to heat generation.

The thinness of the wires raises questions about their ability to stay in place within a freely moving human. The movement of the wires and their impact on the surrounding brain tissue are also important factors to consider.

Animal Welfare: Neuralink has faced significant scrutiny and legal challenges due to violations of animal welfare in its invasive implant surgeries, specifically involving monkeys.

The animal ethics group's lawsuit has also provided on high mortality rates among animals, primarily caused by surgery-related infections and other complications.

Overall, **the available information to the public regarding the procedure's safety and the implant's effectiveness is limited and lacks comprehensive quantitative data.**

Like these there are many concerns with the Neuralink devices. However, it tends to hide those concerns by showing off the coolness of its device.

What lies ahead?

While the concept of Neuralink's interface holds potential, there are numerous steps required before it can genuinely benefit patients in need.

It is crucial to remain attentive because history has shown instances in the US medical field where profit was prioritized over patient safety, and regulatory oversight failed to effectively address such practices.

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17. [Fuelling a truly green transition](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Fuelling a truly green transition**” published in **Business Standard** on **15th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: challenges with green hydrogen mission

News: The government in January this year released its Green Hydrogen Mission (GHM).

About the Green Hydrogen Mission (GHM)

[Click Here to Read](#)

What are the different types of hydrogen and how are they obtained?

[Click Here to Read](#)

However, carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS) is a very costly technology. It has proved viable only where there are depleted oil and gas wells available for large scale storage of CO₂ emissions.

What are the advantages of green hydrogen?

Read Here: [Green Hydrogen: Potential, Issues and Solutions – Explained](#)

Hydrogen may also be liquefied and transported through pipes or in tanks via roads, rail and ships.

It may be converted to fuel cells to generate electricity or for heating and it may also be used in long distance transportation.

What are the challenges associated with green hydrogen?

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the majority (95%) of hydrogen production **currently relies on fossil fuels**.

The Green Hydrogen Mission (GHM) in India aims to develop a green hydrogen capacity of at least 5 million metric tonnes per year by 2030.

This will require an associated addition of 125MW of renewable energy capacity and an investment of approximately 8 trillion.

The GHM intends to utilize high-performance electrolyzers and decentralized renewable power sources like rooftop solar, micro-hydel plants, and biomass to provide clean and affordable power for electrolysis.

The mission also mentions the potential use of waste water in these processes. However, specific plans with detailed numbers are yet to be formulated.

Read More: [Green Hydrogen: Potential, Issues and Solutions – Explained](#)

What can be the way ahead?

Hydrogen has the potential to become a clean and abundant source of energy in the future, **but it is not currently a fully viable alternative**.

However, advancements in technology and lowering costs are continuously improving its prospects.

Moreover, **several advanced countries, including Japan, are making significant technological advancements in promoting hydrogen as a fuel source**.

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India, through its Green Hydrogen Mission (GHM), should consider forging closer collaborations and take the lead in establishing an **International Hydrogen Alliance**.

This alliance would facilitate the pooling of technological and financial resources to promote the hydrogen economy on a global scale.

The **upcoming G20 summit presents a favorable opportunity for India** to announce such an initiative and demonstrate its commitment to advancing the use of hydrogen as a clean energy solution.

18. We're All Aam Aadmi – India's not the biggest mango exporter but the fruit is at its sublime best here. Sad that output is hit by weather

Source: The post is based on the article **"We're All Aam Aadmi – India's not the biggest mango exporter but the fruit is at its sublime best here. Sad that output is hit by weather"** published in **The Times of India** on **15th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

Relevance: About India's Mango Production.

News: Unseasonal weather has drastically reduced the expected mango yields this year.

How weather patterns destroyed Mango production?

Due to fluctuations in weather patterns, UP, the largest mango-growing state's, yield may damage 30-40% of this year's crop.

For example, Malihabad, home of the Dussehri variety, was on its way to a bumper crop until mid-March but then unexpected showers destroyed flowers before they could become fruit. This will reduce the yield up to 80%. Last year, it was extreme heat that did the damage.

Alphonso in Maharashtra and Kesar in Gujarat also face a shortage in yield, thereby increasing the prices. But, there's a bumper yield in Malda, Bengal.

Read more: [Farmer develops mango variety that bears fruits round the year](#)

About India's Mango production and exports

India grows around 1,500 mango varieties. The unique and complex flavours of different desi mangoes set India apart from bigger exporters like Mexico and Thailand.

Exports have remained below potential. This is because, **a)** Domestic demand has remained very high, **b)** This diversity-friendliness has a challenge too. For example, the mango's fruition is so dependent on specific temperatures at specific times.

Read more: [GI certified "Jardalu mangoes" from Bihar exported to the UK](#)

Mangoes need to have two qualities, they need to be sweet and there needs to be plenty. Not all varieties can get impacted by climate change. India should capitalise on that.

19. [Tackling the waste problem](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Tackling the waste problem**” published in the **Business Standard** on **15th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Pollution

Relevance: About the Solid Waste Management.

News: A recent report by World Bank, “What a Waste: A Global Review of Solid Waste Management”, stated that 2.9 billion people lived in metropolitan areas 10 years ago, producing 0.64 kg of Municipal solid waste (MSW) per person daily. However, around 3 billion people live in cities today, producing as much as 1.2 kg of municipal solid waste per person per day.

What is Solid Waste Management?

Read here: [Solid Waste Management](#)

What are the key findings of the World Bank report on Solid Waste?

-Over 200 million metric tonnes of municipal waste are produced worldwide each year by the United States and China.

-Daily per capita waste generation in high-income nations is estimated to climb by 19% by 2050, while in low and middle-income countries it is projected to rise by around 40% or more.

-In terms of total waste production, the East Asia and Pacific region produces the most waste (23%), and West Asia and North Africa produce the least (6%).

-Currently, more than half of the waste is openly dumped in these areas.

Why solid waste management is essential?

Municipal waste management is not only paramount but a necessary function of city governance, especially in a post-pandemic world. This is because **a)** Poorly managed waste typically results in expenses that are higher in the long run than it would have been to manage the waste effectively in the first place, **b)** Poor waste management has a significant detrimental effect on health, the environment both locally and globally, and the economy, and **c)** Municipal waste plays a significant role in greenhouse gas emissions.

About India’s solid waste generation and management

According to the Task Force on Waste to Energy Report, 62 million tonnes of MSW waste are produced annually by 377 million people in India’s urban areas in 2017.

Residents of urban areas generate nearly twice as much waste as those in rural areas. The level of industrialisation, socialisation, and regional climate all impact MSW generation rates. Unsanitary, unscientific and poor disposal of solid waste could further result in environmental deterioration and health issues.

The lack of proactive governance mechanisms in cities to manage waste sustainably and the consumption patterns and behaviour of citizens will lead to tremendous amounts of waste generation.

Read more: [Solid Waste Management in India-An Overview](#)

What should be done to ensure better solid waste management in India?

Integrated strategy for waste management: It involves the planning, funding, construction, and operation of facilities for the segregation, collection, transportation, recycling, treatment,

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and final disposal of waste. This should be taken into consideration to manage the present issues of urban waste management.

Focus on sustainability: Urban local bodies should increase their operation and maintenance of solid waste management systems sustainably. This requires **a)** significant capital investment, **b)** the introduction of cutting-edge, cost-effective technologies, **c)** public-private partnerships in waste management, as well as **d)** the introduction of appropriate waste management practices.

20. [India's slow but sure de-industrialisation is worrying](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India’s slow but sure de-industrialisation is worrying**” published in **Live Mint** on **16th June 2023**.

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

Relevance: **concerns with manufacturing sector**

News: The national accounts data released last month showed India’s provisional GDP growth rate at 7.2% in 2022-23. This was higher than the government’s estimates and also that of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

However, the data also suggests that the structural reasons that contributed to the Indian economy’s slowdown before the pandemic are still present and may have worsened.

What structural reasons are still present in the Indian economy?

The continued weakness of private consumption and investment suggests that the economy is suffering from weak demand.

The GDP estimates show that the manufacturing sector, which is the largest sector of the economy in terms of GDP share and the third largest in terms of employment, **grew only at 1.3%**. This is its second lowest growth in the last 25 years.

Moreover, manufacturing sector growth was 7.8% annually between 2003-04 and 2013-14, which increased to 9.1% between 2013-14 and 2017-18, but then declined to almost a third at 3.4% in the last five years.

Similarly, **the share of manufacturing in the GDP has also declined.**

What does the weakening manufacturing sector imply?

A weakening manufacturing sector raises concerns for the overall economy, especially for employment as this sector serves as a big source of jobs.

According to the employment and unemployment survey of the National Statistical Office (**NSO**), manufacturing accounted for 12.6% of all workers in 2011-12. This declined to 10.9% in 2020-21.

The declining share of manufacturing in overall economic output as well as employment is a worrying sign for the economy’s long-term growth prospects.

This decline signifies a **gradual de-industrialization of the economy**, which will not only impact output growth but also employment and income growth.

Despite various policies like the ‘**Make in India**’, **PLI schemes**, and **corporate tax benefits**, the slowdown has continued. This suggests a policy bias in favor of large corporations rather than strengthening small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

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This also indicates the **problem of declining demand in the Indian economy**. Despite policy efforts and state incentives, the manufacturing sector has suffered due to a reduction in its consumer base.

What can be the way ahead?

Due to the declining trend in the manufacturing sector, workers have shifted from manufacturing to agriculture.

Although agriculture has played a significant role in the economic recovery from the pandemic, it is unlikely to continue its contribution due to increasing input prices and the threat of El Niño.

Therefore, a revival of India's manufacturing sector is necessary. Hence, **the key to boost the manufacturing sector lies in boosting overall demand in the economy, especially discretionary spending.**

21. Pathways to a Viksit Bharat

Source- The post is based on the article "Pathways to a Viksit Bharat" published in the "Business Standard" on 16th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Development

Relevance- Issues related in making India an advanced economy

News- The Government of India in 2022 set itself the goal of a "Viksit Bharat".

What is the meaning of an advanced economy?

The **size of the economy** is important for many reasons. But, it does not alone qualify a country for advanced status.

For instance, China is the **world's second largest economy**. But, it is not considered advanced. Its average citizen is **four times poorer** than the average Britisher and **six times poorer** than the average American.

Similarly, India is now the world's **fifth largest economy**, having overtaken the UK. But, the average Indian is **20 times poorer** than the average Britisher.

In 2022, the **International Monetary Fund** categorised **41 countries as advanced economies**. But, its definition is not **clear or consistent** over time.

The World Bank uses a **cut-off of gross national income per capita of \$13,205 in 2022 prices**. It classifies around **80 countries in the "high-income" category**.

The United Nations Development Programme adds a **human dimension through HDI index** to GNI per capita. It classifies 66 countries into the **"very high human development" category**. It is a rough definition of an advanced economy.

What is the level of growth in GNI and HDI needed for India to become an advanced economy?

The World Bank and the UNDP have clear criteria to define an **advanced economy**. It will take **25 years at a growth rate of 7% per annum** in GNI per capita to reach today's developed country's GNI per capita of \$13,205.

This means GNI must grow at around **8% per annum for the next 25 years**, factoring in population growth.

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India's HDI score in 2021 was 0.633. To reach the cut-off of very high human development at 0.8 will require **HDI annual growth of around 0.9% per annum**.

India's growth in HDI was around 1.25% per annum between 1990 and 2021. India's HDI grew at only **0.88 per cent per annum from 2010-21**. So, to reach the very HDI category will require to keep this rate for the next 25 years.

India must use its **demographic dividend** much better than it has done so far. Rising inequality has also hurt its score.

The UNDP calculates that **India's HDI score** declines by 24% **due to inequality**. Halving inequality would increase India's **HDI score above 0.7** and classify India into the **high HDI category**.

What is the way forward for India to achieve the goal of a "Viksit Bharat"?

To become an advanced economy, India not only needs a more **"Samruddha Bharat"** but also needs to make a more **"Sajit Bharat" (inclusive)**.

Many **upper middle-income countries** such as Argentina and Brazil are stuck in the so-called **middle-income trap**. They did not build the **institutional strength** required to make a successful attempt to become a developed economy.

India must first strive to reach the **upper middle-income status** that requires a **GNI per capita of \$4,255 in 2022 prices**. If India grows at 7% in GNI per capita, it will reach the **upper income status by around 2032**.

Likewise, the UNDP has a **"High" human development category**. India with an HDI score of 0.633 can reach that category **by about 2032** as well.

To reach this intermediate stage, there is a need for **stronger institutions, infrastructure, and human capital**.

If India reaches this stage, it could fall into the **middle-income trap**. Once there with stronger **human capital and institutions**, India can plan for **"Viksit Bharat" @ 100**.

22. Reflections on Artificial Intelligence, as friend or foe

Source- The post is based on the article "Reflections on Artificial Intelligence, as friend or foe" published in "The Hindu" on 16th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, Robotics.

Relevance- Issues related to AI

News- Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been dominating the headlines. The Association for Computing Machinery released a statement in October 2022 on 'Principles for Responsible Algorithmic Systems', a broader class of systems that include AI systems.

What are the areas of use for AI?

AI systems are capable of exhibiting **superhuman performance on specific tasks**. This is evident in the field of **chess, biochemistry for protein folding**.

The **performance and utility** of AI systems improve as the task is **narrowed**. It makes them valuable assistants to humans.

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Speech recognition, translation, and even identifying common objects such as photographs, are just a few tasks performed by AI systems today. It even exceeds **human performance** in some instances.

A big moment for AI was the release of **ChatGPT**. ChatGPT is a **generative AI tool** that uses a **Large Language Model** to generate text. Writing could now be **outsourced** to it.

What are limitations of AI?

Their performance degrades on **more “general” or ill-defined tasks**. They are weak in **integrating inferences** across situations based on the **common sense** humans have.

What are some facts about Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)?

It refers to intelligence that is **not limited or narrow**. Take the example of **human common sense**. It is absent in AI systems.

There are **no credible efforts** towards building AGI yet. Many experts believe AGI will never be achieved by a machine. Others believe it could be in the far future.

True AGI will be a big deal. AGI may lead to **AI “machines”** bettering humans in many **intellectual or mental tasks**.

Scenarios of **super-intelligent machines** enslaving humans have been imagined. AGI systems could be a **superior species** created by humans outside of evolution.

However, the hype and panic about LLMs or AI leading directly to **human extinction** are baseless.

Some experts predict that AGI may be evolved from **GPT-4**. AGI could emerge from a **bigger LLM** in the near future.

Other experts refute this. **Current LLMs and their successors** are not even close to AGI.

What are the possible types of dangers arising from AI?

Superhuman AI: The danger of a **super intelligent AI** converting humans to slaves. This is a highly unlikely scenario.

Malicious humans with powerful AI: AI tools are relatively easy to build. Even **narrow AI tools** can cause serious harm when matched with **malicious intent**.

LLMs can generate **fake news**. **Public opinion** can be manipulated to affect democratic elections. AI tools work globally. **Individual malice** can instantly impact the globe.

Governments may approve or support such actions **against “enemies”**. There is **no effective defence** against malicious human behaviour.

There are concerns about **AI-powered “smart” weapons** in the military. Unfortunately, calls for a ban are not effective in such situations.

Highly capable and inscrutable AI: AI systems will continue to improve and will be employed to assist humans. They may end up harming some sections more than others **unintentionally**.

These systems are created using **Machine Learning** from data and can perpetuate the **shortcomings of the data**. They may introduce **asymmetric behaviours** that go against certain groups.

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Camera-based face recognition systems have been shown to be more accurate on fair-skinned men than on dark-skinned women.

Privacy is a critical concern. Every person can be tracked always, violating the **fundamental right to privacy**.

Another worry is about who develops these technologies and how. Commercial entities with huge computational, data, and human resources are the centres of action.

There is **no effective public oversight**. Everything that affects humans significantly needs **public oversight or regulation**. There is little understanding about **effective regulation without stifling creativity**.

[23. Rules of recovery: Settlement framework provides another option](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Culture shift: UNESCO must act on nations exiting, re-entering on frivolous grounds**” published in the **Business Standard** on **16th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Relevance: About the Framework for Compromise Settlements and Technical Write-offs.

News: Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced the “Framework for Compromise Settlements and Technical Write-offs”.

Banks now have the option of recovering loans through the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. The compromise settlement framework may be useful in settling relatively small loans. The framework gives a bit of flexibility. But some bank unions have termed it a detrimental step that can compromise the integrity of the banking system.

What are the key aspects of RBI’s Framework for Compromise Settlements and Technical Write-offs?

According to the framework, regulated entities are expected to put in place **board-approved policies** for making compromise settlements with debtors as well as for technical write-offs.

Compromise settlement would mean a negotiated arrangement with the borrower to settle the claims of the lender in full, which may lead to a sacrifice of some amount due from the borrower. For the borrowers benefiting from the compromise settlement, there would be a cooling period as determined by the boards of the lenders before fresh lending can be made to such entities.

The **technical write-offs** would mean non-performing outstanding loans at the borrower’s account level and those have been written off by the lender for accounting purposes.

Respective boards are expected to give specific guidance. They are also expected to put in place an accountability framework for the staff dealing with such cases. An official who was involved in sanctioning the loan as an individual or as a member of a committee will not be part of this process.

Settlement for wilful defaulters will require board approval in all cases.

What are the bank’s concerns with RBI’s Framework for Compromise Settlements and Technical Write-offs?

Seeks clarification: Banks seek clarification on lending to accounts that are classified as wilful defaulters or fraud.

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Options of restructuring: Banks make a large number of lending decisions on an ongoing basis and some may go wrong even in the best of circumstances. In the case of businesses, things could be negative because of a variety of factors, including unexpected changes in the macroeconomic environment, affecting the repaying capacity of borrowers. Banks often restructure the terms of loans in such cases.

What should be done?

Focus on lending standards: Lending standards are critical for preserving banking-sector stability. So, the banks must constantly monitor loan accounts and report the true picture to all stakeholders.

Avoid ever-greening of loans: The RBI has found innovative ways used by banks to conceal stress. Banks are also said to be using new methods of ever-greening. Such practices tend to undermine the integrity and stability of the banking system and should be avoided.

The banks should proceed with wilful defaulters or fraud with **care and transparency**. Lenders must use all avenues made available to them for recovering as much as possible from non-performing accounts.

24. Between jobs & slavery: Addressing informal employment is the key

Source: The post is based on the article “**Between jobs & slavery: Addressing informal employment is the key**” published in the **Business Standard** on **16th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Employment.

Relevance: About the issues with Global Slavery Index.

News: Recently Global Slavery Index 2023 has been released. The report highlights that the G20 nations alone account for more than half the people living in modern slavery. However, India does not figure in the top 10 nations in terms of the incidence of slavery per 1,000 people.

Note: *The last edition of the Global Slavery Index was published five years before in 2018.*

What are the key findings of the Global Slavery Index 2023?

Read here: [Global Slavery Index 2023: G20 nations fuelling modern slavery](#)

What are the concerns with Global Slavery Index?

Methodology applied: It is derived from a broad estimate partially based on a “risk score.” The score deploys the same factors to determine whether a nation falls under the “developing” header or not. This automatically leaves the developed nations, mostly in Europe, with relatively delicate scores.

Real slavery is underestimated: Burgeoning African and West Asian refugee crisis and slowing economies suggest that modern slavery may be more prevalent than the surveys suggest.

Issues with sample size: In the past, India had complained that the sample size of the surveys was skewed and the survey’s assumptions ignored the country’s unique socio-economic factors.

The issue with the definition: Global Slavery Index follows no internationally accepted norm and is constantly recalibrated. For instance, the index includes child labour, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced labour from forced marriage within the definition of modern slavery.

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About India's measurement of modern slavery

In India, the proximate term for slavery is bonded labour, which was outlawed in 1976. But the term bonded labour is narrowly defined. The Supreme Court expanded the definition to include workers paid below the prevailing market and legal minimum wages. However, there is no definitive data on modern slavery in India.

For instance, according to the Ministry of Labour and Employment, 93% of the country's workforce falls in the unorganised sector. In that area, the benefits and oversight mechanisms against exploitation are non-existent.

What should be done?

The government introduced the e-Shram portal for unorganised sector workers to register and receive pensions, insurance, and death benefits. About half the workforce has registered on the portal. Now the real test will lie in how easily retired informal workers can access these benefits.

25. [Synthetic human embryos: All about life](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Synthetic human embryos: All about life**" published in **Indian Express** on **17th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of Biotechnology.

Relevance: About Synthetic human embryos.

News: At the International Society of Stem Cell Research's annual meeting in Boston, a woman scientist announced that her team has succeeded in creating synthetic human embryos using stem cells, sidestepping the need for egg and sperm.

About synthetic human embryos

Synthetic embryos are embryos, which are created without fertilization. These are also known as artificial embryos.

These embryos do not require an egg or sperm cell to facilitate their creation. Instead, these are the primitive embryos that include cells that go on to form the placenta, the yolk sac and the embryo itself.

These embryos rely on self-assembling stem cell structures to mimic the natural process of early human development.

Note: Last year, the same team demonstrated that the stem cells from mice could be programmed into developing a beating heart and primordial brain.

What are the challenges associated with synthetic human embryos?

a) It's not yet clear whether these embryos have the potential to progress beyond the early stage, **b)** There are ethical concerns related to synthetic embryos, **c)** Their improvement will also create regulatory challenges, and **d)** None of the animal embryos has gone on to produce living species in the past.

It is time for global nations to set boundaries, limit research to welfare and alleviate the trauma of patients.

26. [Germany's net-zero plan for old vehicles](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Germany’s net-zero plans for old vehicles**” published in **Business Standard** on **17th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: About Germany proposal of adopting carbon-neutral synthetic fuels

News: Germany put forward an interesting proposal when the EU was debating legislation to ensure only zero-emission vehicles would be on European roads by 2035.

What has Germany proposed?

Germany suggested a transition to carbon-neutral synthetic fuels for existing internal combustion vehicles rather than phasing out all internal combustion vehicles.

The proposal has been made due to the fact that even though electric vehicles and hydrogen fuel cells have zero-emission during usage, their manufacturing processes have significant environmental impacts.

Approximately 90% of the world’s vehicles are expected to be internal combustion by 2030, and replacing them entirely would not be a zero-carbon solution.

Some calculations suggest that manufacturing an electric vehicle may have slightly higher environmental impacts compared to an internal combustion vehicle.

Hence, Germany proposed the possibility of producing carbon-negative fuels for IC engines, which would result in a net carbon impact of zero or even negative during the fuel cycle.

This can be done by replacing fuels like petrol, diesel, kerosene, and compressed natural gas (CNG) by **synthetic hydrocarbon fuels**.

Germans have already manufactured synthetic petrol and diesel substitutes from coal in World War II.

How can synthetic hydrocarbon fuel be manufactured?

It can be done by capturing ambient carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This would make the fuel production process carbon-negative.

Additionally, **hydrogen can be generated by using green methods such as running an electric current through water**.

Producing synthetic fuel could be carbon-negative if the carbon emissions from the fuel are less than the carbon captured during the production process.

Even if there is a net carbon release, it may still be lower than the carbon impact of manufacturing a large number of electric vehicles (EVs).

What are the challenges with manufacturing synthetic hydrocarbon fuel?

First, it may be expensive compared to petrol or diesel. However, production costs would reduce with scale and access to cheap, green electricity.

Second, there are also engineering challenges with capturing carbon. Currently, carbon capture is not an efficient process, and there is a lack of sufficient scale for green hydrogen electrolysis. Therefore, **investment in R&D, as well as large-scale implementation, would be needed in addressing these challenges**.

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[27. How an old report can pave way for central forces to stabilise Manipur](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “How an old report can pave way for central forces to stabilise Manipur” published in the “Business Standard” on 17th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance- Issues related to security of northeastern states

News- In Manipur, security situation has deteriorated due to ongoing conflict among Meitei and tribal; people

What Are the recommendations of Punchhi Commission that are relevant in context of Manipur violence?

It studies the feasibility of **supporting legislation under Article 355** for the purpose of **suo motu deployment of Central forces** in the States. An important recommendation made by the Commission was on **Article 355 and 356**.

There was **general reluctance** among political parties to allow the Centre to take over their elected administration even if **law and order** broke down temporarily. The states considered such measures as **political punishment**.

Hence, the Commission recommended to adopt **“Localised Emergency provisions” under Article 355**. It can bring a district or even part of a district under the Central rule. Such take over should **not be for more than three months**.

Another recommendation was to amend the **Communal Violence Bill**. It proposed that state consent should not become a hurdle in the deployment of central forces in a **serious communal riot**.

However, such deployment should **only be for a week** and **post-facto consent** should be taken from the state. This was to prevent a Babri Masjid-type of situation.

Had these recommendations been adopted, the Centre could have taken over the administration of only the Kuki dominant areas in Manipur.

What are the historical examples of such a type of action by the central government to tackle the law-and-order problems in a state?

Something like this was done in 1950 by the then Union Home Minister C Rajagopalachari to tackle the second phase of the **Telangana insurgency**.

The **entire administration including law and order** of a portion of a state was given to the **Central Intelligence Bureau** with a mandate to get rid of insurgents **“within six months”**.

Their area of operations was confined only to Communist strongholds and not the entire Hyderabad state.

[28. Shifting sands – on external trade](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Shifting sands” published in “The Hindu” on 17th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

News- The article explains the scenario of trade in recent times.

What are statistics related to India’s external trade in recent times?

There was a 10.3% decline in **goods exports** in May. It marks the **fourth successive month** of contraction in good exports.

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Except for electronics **exports**, other categories of exported goods did not show good performance.

Engineering goods contracted for the 11th month in a row. The **textiles sector** shrank for the seventh straight month.

There was a 30% decline in **petroleum exports**. It may largely be due to **cooling global prices** that are also affecting other commodities' export values.

After a 6.7% rise in 2022-23, **goods exports** are now down 11.4% over the first two months of this year.

The current estimate of \$25.3 billion for May's **services exports** is quite sobering.

Global service exports increased by a mere 0.7% in May. There was a **26.7% boom** in services exports last year. The **global slowdown** now appears to be impacting the services too.

Core imports excluding oil and gems and jewellery have contracted 5.5% in 2023-24.

May **import bill** was just 6.6% below 2022 levels and almost 14% over April's figure which had been the lowest in 15 months. This has lifted the **merchandise trade deficit** to a five-month high of \$22.1 billion.

It is believed the trend may improve from July or August. The World Trade Organization has upgraded the **global trade growth** from 1% to 1.7% for 2023.

29. How India can lead multilateralism at WTO

Source- The post is based on the article "How India can lead multilateralism at WTO" published in "The Indian Express" on 17th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance- Issues related to WTO

News- The recently concluded meeting of the G20 working group on trade and investment focused on the important issue of WTO reform.

How has the approach of the global community towards global economic governance changed in recent times?

Earlier The world favoured **economic interdependence**. The WTO was aimed at **legalising and policing economic interdependence**.

Today's world is dominated by **geoeconomic considerations and heightened securitisation of international economic relations**.

The pursuit of **unilateralism in international economic relations**, especially by developed countries like the US, is on the rise. There is little regard for WTO law.

Economic policies such as **industrial subsidies and local content requirements** have made a comeback. There is a deliberate effort to weaken **trade multilateralism** in favour of **external plurilateral alignments** keeping the big power confrontation in mind.

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What are the WTO reforms that should be advocated by G20's "middle powers" such as India, Indonesia, Brazil, and South Africa?

First is related to the **special and differential treatment (SDT) principle** in WTO agreements. SDT provisions give **special rights** to developing countries and **obligate developed countries** to treat the former more favourably.

However, **only 21% of the SDT provisions** in various WTO agreements oblige developed countries to provide **differential treatment** to developing countries. SDT provisions need to be given **more teeth and effort**.

Second is related to the **appellate body**. It remains paralysed since 2019 because of the US.

The remaining G20 countries need to either **persuade the US** to change its position or **resurrect the appellate body** without the US.

Third is related to the **consensus-based decision-making** in the WTO. It is slowing from 2017 onward. There has been a shift away from this principle toward **plurilateral discussions** on select issues such as **investment facilitation**.

While the **plurilateral approach** is a welcome development for rule-making, there is a need to develop a **multilateral governance framework for plurilateral agreements**.

This **governance framework** should include key principles of **non-discrimination, transparency, and inclusivity**. Forcing plurilateral agreements on non-willing members will increase the **trust deficit** between developed and developing countries.

Fourth is related to addressing the **transparency gap in the WTO**, especially in terms of **notification requirements**.

The WTO member countries are **obliged to notify** all their laws and regulations that affect trade. But, the **compliance** with this obligation is poor. This increases the **cost of trade**, especially for developing countries.

30. [Railway safety — listen to the voices from below](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "Railway safety — listen to the voices from below" published in "The Hindu" on 17th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure

Relevance- Issues related to railway safety

News- The triple train collision near Balasore in Odisha on June 2 led to the tragic loss of over 280 lives.

What is the record of railways on safety in recent times?

Statistics show that over the last two decades, the **number of derailments** has drastically declined from around 350 per year around the turn of the millennium, to 22 in 2021-22. This is a **commendable achievement** by any standards.

This has been achieved despite a nearly threefold increase in **freight loading** and more than a doubling of **passenger traffic**.

What is one aspect of railway safety that has not received sufficient attention?

This concerns the **flow of information** regarding **unsafe practices or situations** on a **real-time basis**.

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Unlike many other organisations, the activities of the Railways are **spread geographically** over a wide area.

It involves a **multiplicity of departments**. They need to work in close coordination on a **real-time basis** to ensure the smooth and safe running of trains.

In order to **ensure uniformity** in the **compliance of rules and regulations and safety**, a large number of **codes and manuals** have been evolved for different departments to standardise the procedures.

Periodic field inspections are done by authorities at various levels. It ensures **compliance with laid-down procedures and standards of workmanship**.

Every department has evolved a **set of schedules** for the inspection of various work centres and **operational procedures** for every level of the management. This system suffers from a few drawbacks.

The **“top-down” approach** places the onus of detecting deviations on the higher authorities. They look down on the lower staff with **suspicion and distrust**.

It encourages **window dressing** and sweeping of problems under the carpet. There is a lack of **transparency and frankness** in such a situation.

This can be **counterproductive** in matters that concern railway safety. Many accidents are the culmination of **unsafe practices or deviations from the norm** over a period of time.

How real empowerment of lower staff can be done and how it is useful?

A system called **Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis System (CIRAS)** was developed by one of the British universities nearly three decades ago.

This encourages the lower staff to point out **deviations** on a **real-time basis**, and the expression of **frank view**. This is an example of real empowerment of staff. The introduction of a similar reporting system on the Indian Railways is necessary.

The **success and effectiveness** of a CIRAS-like reporting system depends not only on the **physical infrastructure**. A total **change in the mindset** of the management, from the highest to the lower levels is required.

There must be an attitudinal change from the **conventional approach of fault-finding and punishment** to a **shared commitment** to ensure safety at all levels. The aim should be to correct, not punish.

What are other reforms needed for the railway?

There is a need for serious rethink on the recently introduced **Indian Railways Management Service (IRMS)** scheme. It can destroy **loyalty and sense of “ownership”** towards a particular department amongst the management cadre.

It is perhaps also time to revert to the earlier system of having a **full-time Cabinet Minister** for the Railways. There is a need for undivided attention at the **highest policy-making level**.