



9 PM

Compilation

10th to 15th July, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. [Women's reproductive autonomy as the new catchword](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Women's reproductive autonomy as the new catchword**” published in “The Hindu” on 11th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- Population and associated issues & Social empowerment

News: world population day (July 11) theme ‘Unleashing the power of gender equality: Uplifting the voices of women and girls to unlock our world’s infinite possibilities’

How is the World population day theme relevant to India?

The theme of this year’s World Population Day, ‘Unleashing the power of gender equality’, resonates powerfully with India.

When we empower women and girls, we harness a wealth of leadership, creativity, and innovation. In India, women-led development across various sectors must prioritize reproductive autonomy.

Why is there a reframe in population perspective?

Global obsessions with population size and fertility rates have overshadowed reproductive autonomy. It’s vital to understand there are no ‘ideal’ numbers. Genuine population stability comes when reproductive and sexual health decisions are discrimination-free, services are affordable and high-quality, and women and couples can choose their family size.

What progress has India made in family planning?

Despite challenges, India has made strides in family planning.

The country provides a comprehensive reproductive health services package, including modern contraceptives, counselling, and emergency contraception.

Through the Family Planning 2030 partnership, India expands contraceptive choices, increasing women’s rights and autonomy.

What are the achievements of India’s health, population and development programmes?

India’s programmes have steadily improved over the years. **Life expectancy has increased significantly, with Indians now living a decade longer than in the 1990s.**

Maternal mortality rates have dropped from 254 in 2004 to 97 per 100,000 live births. Child marriages have halved since 2000, teen pregnancies have decreased, and access to essential services has improved.

What hurdles to gender equality persist in India?

Despite progress, many Indian women lack physical autonomy. **The recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) reveals that only 10% of Indian women can independently make health decisions.** Almost half of all pregnancies in India are unplanned.

What are the benefits of advancing gender equality?

Gender equality benefits all of society. In aging societies, gender parity in the workforce improves productivity. In countries with rapid population growth, empowering women through education and family planning can significantly boost human capital and inclusive economic development.

What opportunities does gender equality offer to India’s Economy?

Raising women’s labour force participation by 10 percentage points could contribute to more than 70% of the potential GDP growth opportunity (\$770 billion additional GDP by 2025), presenting a significant chance to advance gender equality and grow the economy.

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What investments are needed for gender equality?

Achieving gender equality requires investments at all stages of a woman's life. Initiatives must engage with women, girls, and marginalized groups and empower them through legislative and policy changes.

How does world population day promote gender equality?

World Population Day reaffirms the commitment to placing individual rights, especially women's rights and wellbeing, at the center of population and development discussions. Gender-just approaches are foundational for a more prosperous India and world.

2. [North India's monsoon mayhem](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**North India's monsoon mayhem**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **12th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Geography

Relevance: Climatology of India

News-. The article explains the pattern of monsoon this year and factors influencing monsoon.

What has been the pattern of monsoon this year?

Monsoon onset was delayed by **Interactions between typhoons and cyclones**. **Cyclone Biparjoy** delayed the arrival of monsoon over Mumbai by nearly two weeks.

The monsoon in Mumbai arrived together with Delhi for the first time in over half a century.

The **distribution of rainfall** remains patchy. **Excess rainfall** is witnessed over the northern Western Ghats and northwest India. There is deficit in Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

Extreme heat has also been reported even with **heavy rainfall** in some areas of Himachal Pradesh.

What are the factors influencing monsoon in India?

Global warming creates a **warm, humid atmosphere**, which acts like a **drug for the weather**. All weathers are affected by global warming.

Weather patterns are also caused by other factors. One such factor is the **El Niño**.

Wildfires have led to burning over three times the normal area and **emitted** about three times the normal amount of carbon dioxide. This has **caused warming**.

The strongest winds break into **clockwise or anticlockwise patterns** in the upper atmosphere, especially in **mountainous terrain**, like the Himalayas.

The **strong clockwise winds** of the upper atmosphere require an **anticyclonic circulation** near the surface to feed the upper-level outflow. This convergence near the surface causes **excess rainfall**.

The warming over the Himalayas has not been uniform. Some parts in the mountain chain are impacted by **local warming**. During the monsoon, the **local features** impact the weather pattern. This can lead to **cloudbursts, heavy rains, or even heat waves**.

What are the factors that are having an influence on monsoon rainfall this year?

Rainfall over northwest India is in line with the fact that the Arabian Sea has warmed by around 1.5 degrees Celsius since January.

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This year, **pre-monsoon rainfall** has been higher than normal due to the warm Arabian Sea, combined with an **unusually high frequency** of western disturbances. Soil has been left moister than normal, which has impacted the **monsoon development**.

The monsoon is also influenced by the **Atlantic Ocean**. The entire Atlantic has been warmer than average since March. An **Atlantic Niño, with a warmer tropical Atlantic**, usually tends to **dampen monsoon rainfall**. The effects of this on monsoon this year are unclear.

3. Demographic transition and change in women's lives

Source: The post is based on the article "**Demographic transition and change in women's lives**" published in **The Hindu** on 12th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- population and associated issues

News: The article discusses impacts of demographic transition on the lives of women.

How has India's demographic journey impacted women's lives?

The surge of India's population from 340 million at independence to 1.4 billion was fueled by decreased mortality rates. With **male life expectancy rising from 56 in 1941 to 69 today**, Indian families started having fewer children. This brought about significant shifts in the lives of Indian women, especially in their role as mothers, their engagement in education and employment, and their experiences in old age.

How has the decrease in 'Fertility Rate' affected gender preference?

With families having fewer children, a son's guarantee became harder, raising the probability of not having a son from 6% with four children to 25% with two. **A study from the India Human Development Survey found that 85% of women respondents expected old age support from their sons**, hence sex-selective abortions and neglect of sick daughters became prevalent, reducing the number of girls per 100 boys from 96 to 91 between 1950 and 2019.

What implications do fewer children have for women's education and employment?

As mothering became a lesser part of women's lives due to lower fertility, more opportunities for education and employment arose. **Women's years spent caring for children under five reduced from 14 to eight between 1992-93 and 2018-20**. However, despite over 70% of girls enrolling in secondary education, early marriage and childbearing persist as defining factors of women's lives, with the average age at first birth remaining below 22 years for women born in the 1980s.

What role does early motherhood play in women's employment?

Early motherhood hinders women's labor force participation because the peak childcare years clash with the period for gaining work experience and securing skilled jobs. As a result, women often only have access to unskilled work once their children have grown.

How has increased life expectancy affected women in old age?

With life expectancy rising, **the proportion of women aged 65 and above increased from 5% to 11% between 1950 and 2022 and is predicted to reach 21% by 2050**. Aging has unique implications for women, as they usually outlive their husbands and, without access to savings and property, become dependent on their children for support.

What measures can help break the cycle of gendered disadvantage?

Enhancing women's access to employment and assets could lessen their reliance on sons. However, efforts to increase women's labor force participation must be paired with access to affordable childcare. An experiment in Madhya Pradesh found that expanding the Anganwadis to include a crèche increased work participation of mothers. Practical strategies for childcare access could involve staffing crèche under the **National Rural Employment Guarantee**

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Scheme or setting up neighbourhood childcare centres through self-help groups. These steps could help harness the potential demographic dividend fully.

4. Delhi's relationship with Yamuna river and how it evolved over time

Source- The post is based on the article "Delhi's relationship with Yamuna river and how it evolved over time" published in "The Indian Express" on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Modern History. GS1- Geography

Relevance- Historical and geographical aspects related to river Yamuna

News- Recently, the water level in Yamuna in Delhi rose to 208.66 metres. It caused Delhi's worst flooding on record.

What is the history of forts built around river Yamuna?

Salimgarh Fort, constructed in 1546 by **Salim Shah Suri** stands on a **riverine island**. He was the son of Shershah Suri. **The Red Fort** was built in 1648 on the western bank of a branch of the Yamuna River.

In a painting from "**Reminiscences of Imperial Delhi**" by **Mazhar Ali Khan**, commissioned by colonial administrator **Charles Metcalfe**, the two forts are depicted connected by a bridge. This bridge was constructed by the order of **Bahadur Shah Zafar**.

Shah Jahan's original city boasted **14 gates**. It included the "**water gate**" known as **Khizri Darwaza**, which provided direct access to the river.

Of these gates, only **Delhi Gate, Kashmere Gate, Ajmeri Gate, Turkman Gate, and Nigambodh Gate** have survived.

Other gates, such as **Lahori Darwaza, Kabuli Darwaza, Lal Darwaza, and Khizri Darwaza**, are no longer extant.

Shah Jahan himself first arrived at the completed Red Fort by way of the Yamuna River and entered through the **water gate**.

When it was inaugurated, Shah Jahan entered the Red Fort through the **Khizri Darwaza**. A **moonlight celebration** took place.

It was through this **Khizri Darwaza** that **Bahadur Shah Zafar** departed on the night of September 17, 1857, following the fall of Delhi.

How river Yamuna played an important role in relation to the fort?

Its presence was a significant factor in **selecting the fort's location**, as it served as both a **natural barrier and a source of water** for the growing population.

Within the fort, a system of water channels was established, which relied on water sourced from the Yamuna.

Initially, the Yamuna River served as a **defence for the Red Fort**. However, the course of the river gradually shifted away from the fort during the **reign of Muhammad Shah 'Rangila'**.

When Britishers decided to relocate the capital of the British Raj to Delhi, the **Coronation Park** area was initially proposed as the site.

However, during the monsoon season of 1911, this area experienced flooding. As a result, the decision was made to establish the **capital at Raisina Hill**.

What is the reason behind changing course of river Yamuna?

One of the factors believed to contribute to this phenomenon is the **movement of the Indian Tectonic Plate**.

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The Indian Plate has been steadily **shifting northward**. It is resulting in the **rising of the Himalayas**. This movement is considered a significant reason for the **eastward shift of the Yamuna River's course**.

Additionally, rivers in the **alluvial plains of North India** are more prone to changes in their paths. The **alluvial terrain** in these areas is **soft and easily influenced by shifting river courses**.

In some places, Ganga river courses since 1786 have changed direction by up to 34 km. For instance, in Badaun, the river has **relocated** approximately 10 km from its previous position.

General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. [Numbers Game – on data collection methods for surveys](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Numbers Game – on data collection methods for surveys**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **10th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance– Issues related to data collection and statistics by government

News- In the last four months, three members of the PM’s economic advisory council have independently expressed concern about the quality of official statistics.

What are issues with government statistics and data collection?

The primary data generation process is hampered by the lack of adherence to set timelines. The census has been indefinitely postponed, creating a significant gap in the data system. In addition, surveys such as the consumer expenditure survey and the economic census are also experiencing delays.

Users have raised concerns over the **quality of the data** generated.

The National Statistical Commission (NSC), formed in 2006 to spearhead statistical activities and establish standards. It was intended to gain authority through legislation. However, even after seventeen years, the legislation has not been passed.

What is the way forward to strengthen the statistical system of the Indian government?

The NSC membership selection process should involve a committee comprising parliamentarians. It is crucial for shielding the statistical system from allegations of political bias.

A mechanism to ensure **financial autonomy** is necessary. An upgrade to the statistical system must be overseen by a **technically equipped body** that has **statutory powers**. **Reliable data** is an **essential need**.

India has built an **impressive structure** to capture **administrative data** by governments. However, this mode of data collection needs to be complemented by the **official statistical system** generating **primary data through surveys** to fill the gaps.

While India has developed a robust structure for collecting administrative data by the government. However, this data collection method needs to be balanced with the official statistical system’s primary data generation through surveys to cover the existing gaps.

2. [Delhi’s Kyiv Calculations – on India-Ukraine relations](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Delhi’s Kyiv Calculations**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **10th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and Ukraine bilateral relationship

News- India’s MEA secretary (west) Sanjay Verma’s upcoming visit to Kyiv could potentially mark a turning point in Indo-Ukrainian ties.

What are the issues with India and Ukraine bilateral relationship?

Historically, the relations between India and Ukraine are based on the premise that Ukraine is a **satellite of Russia**. There were no efforts to innovate, rethink and revisit.

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Whereas, Ukrainians feel that India has not done enough to stop **Russian aggression**. Today, Ukrainians use phrases like “**India does not care**” for India’s response towards Russia’s war against Ukraine.

There is a lack of **high-level political visits**. Ukraine hosted Indian Presidents in 1993 and 2005. But the only time the PM of India Indira Gandhi visited was in 1982, when Ukraine was a part of the USSR.

What has been India’s position on the Ukraine war?

PM Narendra Modi stated publicly in the presence of President Vladimir Putin, “**this is not an era of war**” at the SCO Summit in Samarkand. India also reiterated its support for **territorial integrity, sovereignty and commitment to the UN Charter** by member states.

However, India did not condemn **Russian aggression** openly.

What are potential bilateral relationships between India and Ukraine?

Policymakers in India realise the urgent need to overhaul **India’s policy towards Ukraine**. In this context, this visit will rekindle hope.

India was present at a **summit on Ukraine in Copenhagen**. This was the first ever presence of **non-Western states** like India, Saudi Arabia, Brazil and South Africa in such a format.

This summit is an established platform with almost 50 countries, based on the **10-point Peace Plan** of the Ukrainian President.

The war has brought out the **post-colonial identity** of modern Ukraine. It shows the similarity with the nations in the **southern hemisphere**.

Ukraine is no longer a problem of Europe alone. So, India’s involvement is important to protect its **national interest** as a **global player**.

What are the challenges in Indian foreign policy approach towards Russia?

It is difficult to reshape India-Russia relations and remove the **legacy of the Soviet era**.

Russian strategists fully understand **India’s strategic necessity** to be closer to the US and the West, but it also expects that India holds no open objection to its **closeness to China**.

Countries of the Global South are becoming aware that **Russia’s policies towards countries of the former Soviet Union** are based on **hegemony and sphere of influence**. **Russia is ignoring agency and representation of these countries**.

After more than 30 years of sovereign Ukraine’s existence, Russia is apprehensive of **India’s independent policies** towards it.

What is the way forward for India and Ukraine bilateral relationship?

There is a need to widen **people-to-people contacts and academic exchanges**.

The **war against Ukraine** is an opportunity for India to get rid of its **post-Soviet inertia and start afresh**. India is expected to understand Ukraine from this standpoint.

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[3. Restoring the World Trade Organization's crown jewel](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Restoring the World Trade Organization's crown jewel**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Important International Institutions**

Relevance: **concerns associated with** WTO's dispute settlement system (DSS)

News: In June 2022, at the Geneva ministerial conference, the member-countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) reached a crucial agreement.

Recently, an agreement was reached for revival of the WTO's dispute settlement system (DSS) by 2024, also known as the “crown jewel” of the organization. **DSS has been paralyzed due to the non-functioning of its appellate body** since 2019.

What is the Dispute Settlement System of the WTO?

[Click Here to Read](#)

What are the reasons behind the non-functioning of the appellate body of the DSS?

The United States has blocked the appointment of appellate body members, making it inactive. It has criticized the appellate body of the WTO for exceeding its institutional mandate and engaging in judicial overreach.

One of the main concerns raised by the U.S. is that the appellate body has been creating binding precedents through its decisions, which goes against the WTO's dispute settlement understanding (DSU).

It is well-established that **there is no rule of stare decisis, i.e., no rule of precedent in international law. It is system followed by Courts under which Courts** refer to the previous, similar legal issues to guide their decisions.

Further, **the WTO's DSU also makes this clear in Article 3.2 by stating that** the appellate body rulings can neither add nor diminish the rights and obligations of WTO member-countries.

Therefore, the appellate body needs to ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of WTO agreements **without establishing binding precedents**.

However, **the appellate body has encouraged WTO panels to consider previous interpretations, only in similar cases**, while it has also departed from previous rulings which have cogent reasons.

Moreover, **other appellate bodies, such as** the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea also follow past decisions.

Why are other strategic reasons behind the United States blocking the appointment of DSS's appellate body members?

The United States appears to have a larger strategy of de-judicializing trade multilateralism.

With the creation of the WTO, governments around the world accepted certain norms of international law to evaluate their actions and gave this authority to international courts, which resulted in the legalization of international relations.

It also led to judicialization of international relations, with the expansion of international courts and tribunals that dominated national decision-making.

This judicialization has raised concerns about the erosion of national sovereignty as countries delegate critical decision-making powers to international courts.

Therefore, the United States, **facing the economic challenges posed by China, aims to regain full control over its trade policies by doing away** with the judicial review of the WTO appellate body.

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Note: According to Daniel Abebe and Tom Ginsburg, De-judicialization is the reverse phenomenon where countries weaken international courts to take back decision-making power.

Must Read: [Dispute Settlement System of the WTO: Challenges and Solutions – Explained](#)

What can be the way ahead?

It seems useless to try to restore the WTO's appellate body through negotiations with the United States. **Instead, other countries should try to elect the appellate body members by resorting to voting at the WTO's General Council meeting.**

4. [What Data Protection Bill needs to do to actually protect](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**What Data Protection Bill needs to do to actually protect**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 10th July 2023.

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

News: India's government is considering reintroducing the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill during the upcoming Parliament Monsoon session. The aim of this potential move is to better protect online users, referred to as 'digital nagriks' or digital citizens.

What is data portability?

Data portability is a provision that allows users to move their personal data from one digital platform to another. It's designed to give individuals more control over their online data. For instance, a small business using a large e-commerce platform can take its user data and transfer it to another platform. This means that if the business is unhappy with the practices of the current platform, it can switch to a competitor without losing all the data it generated on the original platform. This empowers users and provides them with more control over their own data.

What is data interoperability?

Data interoperability refers to the ability of different digital platforms to work together and exchange information seamlessly. It would allow users who switch platforms to not only take their data with them, but also continue interacting with users from the original platform. This enhances the users' flexibility and freedom, and also encourages cross-platform communication and interaction.

For instance, if data interoperability were implemented, a Twitter user could choose to leave Twitter for a rival platform, taking all her personal data with her. In addition, due to data interoperability, she would still be able to communicate with her contacts on Twitter, despite having switched platforms.

Should the Government Include Data Portability and Interoperability Provisions?

Given the benefits of data portability and interoperability, the government should include these provisions in the revised Digital Personal Data Protection Bill.

Such a move can significantly enhance user control over personal data and potentially stimulate India's start-up ecosystem by fostering healthy competition. It's a crucial step to transform and democratize digital experiences, making it more beneficial and empowering for users, while also encouraging innovative and responsible practices in data management by tech platforms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, incorporating data portability and interoperability into the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill could enhance user control, stimulate India's start-up ecosystem, and revolutionize internet interaction, offering a critical step forward in our increasingly digital world.

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5. [Blurred lines – on US’s delivery of cluster munitions to Ukraine](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Blurred lines” published in “The Hindu ” on 10th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations (IR)

News: The Biden administration recently decided to send cluster munitions to Ukraine in the wake of the ongoing Russian invasion. It illustrates both the difficulties faced by Kyiv and its western allies in the protracted war, and the U.S.’s willingness to intensify the conflict.

About Convention on Cluster Munitions

Convention on Cluster Munitions, an international treaty, which was adopted by more than 100 countries on May 30, 2008, prohibited the manufacture, transfer, and use of cluster munitions. It entered into force on Aug. 1, 2010.

Is the U.S. contradicting its own criticisms of war crimes?

Even though the U.S. has not signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, it has previously criticized Russia for using such munitions in the conflict, labeling it as war crimes. Yet, the U.S.’s change of stance, as part of its 42nd aid package to Ukraine, underlines the pressures Ukraine is enduring on the battlefield.

What are the factors behind this US’s Decision?

Ukraine’s dependency on the West for resources like artillery shells and ammunition stands in stark contrast to Russia’s undisturbed weapon supply. This discrepancy strains the Western reserves, leaving Ukraine in a disadvantageous position.

Initially, it was assumed that Ukraine’s swift victories would pressure Russia’s President Vladimir Putin. But, the strong defensive fortifications by the Russians along the front line present formidable obstacles. Ukraine’s minor territorial gains in the southeast came at high costs. Also, their aim of cutting off Putin’s land bridge in Zaporizhzhia remains unfulfilled.

This challenging reality led to the U.S.’s “difficult decision” of sending cluster munitions. Despite President Biden justifying it as aiding Ukraine’s self-defence, the decision to send these potentially civilian-targeting weapons to the battlefield blurs moral lines.

6. [The Global South: origins and significance](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The Global South: origins and significance**” published in “The Hindu” on 11th July 2023.

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

News: The refusal of several important African, Asian, and Latin American countries to stand with NATO in the Ukraine crisis has pushed the phrase “Global South” to the fore once more.

What does the term ‘Global South’ Signify and why is it relevant today?

The term “Global South” broadly refers to developing or underdeveloped countries, primarily situated in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These nations often face higher levels of poverty, income inequality, and lower life expectancies in comparison to the wealthier nations of the “Global North,” which mostly include North America, Europe, and parts of Oceania.

How did ‘Global South’ replace the term ‘Third World’?

The term ‘Global South’ was first used in 1969 by political activist Carl Oglesby. However, it only gained significant traction after the 1991 Soviet Union breakup. Before that, ‘Third World’ was the widely used term for under-industrialized nations, coined by Alfred Sauvy in 1952. After the Soviet Union’s fall, the term ‘Third World’ became less popular, largely due to its negative associations with instability and poverty. The phrase ‘Global South’ emerged as a more neutral

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replacement, dissociating from the problematic narratives of 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' nations.

Is the 'Global South' geographically defined?

No, the term 'Global South' isn't geographically constrained. The two largest countries in the Global South, China and India, are located entirely in the Northern Hemisphere. It is more of a geopolitical term denoting political, economic, and historical commonalities. Most of these nations experienced colonialism and imperialism, shaping their perspective on global power dynamics, especially in relation to the West.

What's changing in the 'Global South'?

A significant shift in wealth has been noted since the 21st century, with wealth moving from the North Atlantic to Asia Pacific. By 2030, three of the four largest economies (China, India, and Indonesia) are expected to be from the Global South. **The combined GDP of BRICS nations, which are dominated by the Global South, has already surpassed that of the G7 countries.** Additionally, cities like Beijing now boast more billionaires than New York.

Is the 'Global South' gaining more political influence?

Countries from the Global South are increasingly flexing their political muscles. For instance, China is playing an important role in Middle Eastern diplomacy, while Brazil is actively proposing peace plans for the war in Ukraine. This rise in political and economic power is reshaping global dynamics, with experts predicting the arrival of an "Asian Century" and a "post-Western world."

7. [China view on SCO summit: Iran welcome, need to 'save' group from India](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**China view on SCO summit: Iran welcome, need to 'save' group from India**" published in "**The Indian Express**" on 11th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- India and US bilateral relationship

News- The membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is growing. Iran is the newest entrant at the just-concluded 23rd leaders' summit in New Delhi.

India's association with the SCO began in 2005 as an Observer country, and it became a full Member State at the Astana Summit in 2017.

What are the viewpoints of the Chinese strategic community about India's membership of SCO?

China's **strategic affairs community** was opposed to the **SCO membership of India**. India's role and presence within the grouping is compared to **Turkey in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**.

Foreign policy analysts in China have welcomed **Iran's entry**. It will prevent India from **completely destroying the SCO**.

India is **spreading disharmony** within the SCO. It is openly opposing the **Belt and Road Initiative** and unwilling to support the initiative to set up an **SCO Development Bank**.

India has actually used its **SCO membership** as a "platform" to **challenge and embarrass China**.

Some observers believe that India was accepted as a full member on **Moscow's insistence**. The purpose was to **counterbalance China** for advocating **Pakistan's inclusion** into the organisation.

China agreed to the Russian viewpoint that **unity between Moscow, Beijing, and New Delhi** is necessary for challenging **US-led Western dominance in Asia**, or particularly in Central Asia and Eurasia.

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Moscow was wooing India for **purchasing Russian weapons**, and put **pressure on Beijing** to keep it **sandwiched between Moscow and New Delhi**.

China was surprised when New Delhi joined the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue gathering** in Manila when Doklam was continuing.

Despite India joining the SCO and **Wuhan and Chennai friendship summits in 2018 and 2019**, the **Doklam standoff** was precursor to the **Galwan border clash**.

Many scholars have called for **expelling India** from the SCO. They point to the success of **Modi's official state visit to the US**.

Some voices in China are demanding for the **SCO "exit mechanism"** and **impose appropriate "constraints"** on member states.

As per scholars, New Delhi has made deliberate efforts by suddenly transforming the first **Indian presidency summit of the SCO** into a **mere two-hour online affair**.

8. [Sujan Chinoy writes: New America-India partnership opens up the potential for a multi-polar Asia](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"Sujan Chinoy writes: New America-India partnership opens up the potential for a multi-polar Asia"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **11th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Regional and global groupings

Relevance: SCO

News- The membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is growing. Iran is the newest entrant at the just-concluded 23rd leaders' summit in New Delhi.

What are the reasons behind the increasing closeness between India and the US?

India's realization of its potential heavily relies on a **closer partnership, particularly in high-tech sectors**, with the United States. The US cannot effectively establish a **multi-polar Asia** without a **strong and resilient relationship** with India.

Prime Minister Modi's visit is expected to influence the evolving **geo-economic and geo-strategic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region**.

Over fifty years ago, communist China benefited from **advanced US technologies**. However, this dynamic shifted when China began **challenging US dominance**.

Importantly, the two countries **lacked shared values**. In contrast, the close partnership between democratic India and democratic US is more **viable and sustainable** in the long term.

Why have some voices expressed concern over enthusiasm in the US for closer partnership with India?

Despite significant efforts from the United States, India cannot become a **true ally or a significant strategic partner**.

Notion of shared values is **empty, lacking any substantial alignment** in this regard. India's **perceived neutrality** in the Ukraine crisis and allegations of **democratic regression** have become convenient grounds for criticism.

Why do these concerns have no solid basis?

[Text Wrapping Break]**Shared values** are not the **sole determining factor** in shaping US foreign policy. The US has **established treaty alliances and security partnerships** with various authoritarian regimes across the globe.

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In Latin America, the US has maintained **strategic ties** with a range of **fascist and military regimes**, including leaders like Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, General Pinochet in Chile.

Similar alliances can be found with **several Gulf monarchies**. US policy towards these countries has been primarily driven by **US interests, rather than shared values**.

Neither its **political system of China** nor the **Tiananmen Square incident** in 1989 hindered Western democracies from engaging with China. In contrast, India is the world's **most populous democracy** and a **credible representative of the Global South**.

President Biden and the US government have consistently highlighted **India's democratic credentials**.

It was evident from the **joint statement** released during Prime Minister Modi's visit. It underscores **values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, inclusion, pluralism, and equal opportunities** as areas of common ground.

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

[Text Wrapping Break]The convergence between India and the US today is rooted in the evolving **geopolitical landscape** and the emerging threats posed by **authoritarian states**.

Both countries believe that **coercion and bullying** have no place in international relations. Working towards **stability and multi-polarity in Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region** is a **shared objective**.

India and the US do not need to be formal treaty allies for upholding a **rules-based international order**. Even with some differences on **current global order and reform of multilateral institutions**, a **deeper partnership** is possible.

9. [Day-to-day Supreme Court hearings from Aug 2: The issues in challenge to Centre's 2019 Jammu & Kashmir decisions](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Day-to-day Supreme Court hearings from Aug 2: The issues in challenge to Centre's 2019 Jammu & Kashmir decisions**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on 11th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance- Issues related to special status of J&K

News- The Supreme Court on Tuesday has said it will begin [hearing petitions challenging the changes to Article 370](#).

What was the modus operandi used by the central government to change the constitutional status of J&K?

The Centre issued an order amending The **Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954**, and superseding it with The **Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019**.

The new order made “all the provisions of the Constitution” applicable to J&K state. The government also amended **Article 367 to add a new Clause (4)**. It makes the Constitution of India **directly applicable** to J&K.

Article 370 provided for application of **only Article 1 and Article 370** to Jammu & Kashmir. Other provisions of the Constitution did not **automatically extend to J&K**.

But clause (1)(d) of Article 370 empowered the President of India to extend them through an executive order with the concurrence of the government of J&K.

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The President issued a **declaration under Article 370(3)**. It makes all its clauses **inoperative except**. The provision that all articles of the Constitution shall apply to J&K is still operative.

What are the constitutional issues raised by this move of the central government?

Article 370(3) granted the President the authority to **declare Article 370 null and void** only if recommended by the **Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir**.

However, the **Constituent Assembly** no longer existed. So, this power of the President became **defunct**.

Article 370 clarified that the state government referred to the **Maharaja of J&K, who acted upon the advice of the council of ministers**. There was no state government in J&K. So, the President had no means to obtain the consent of the state government.

There was **no constitutional or legal mechanism** available to the Central government to revoke or amend Article 370.

The Central government utilised the **President's powers under Article 370(1)(d)** to modify Article 367, which provides **guidelines for interpreting the Constitution**.

A new clause was introduced into Article 367, replacing the **"Constituent Assembly of the State"** mentioned in Article 370(3) with the **"Legislative Assembly of the State."**

During the **President's direct rule in J&K**, the President assumed all the functions of the J&K government.

President's Rule serves as an **interim arrangement** until an **elected government** is established, and thus, the administration under President's Rule should not make decisions that fundamentally alter the **constitutional structure of the state**.

On what basis, the abolition of Article has been challenged before SC?

The J&K Legislative Assembly did not possess the authority to propose any amendment to the Constitution of India as per **J&K constitution**.

The **Jammu and Kashmir (Reorganisation) Act, 2019** divided J&K into two Union Territories. It is **unprecedented in India's constitutional history**.

It **violates Article 3** of the Indian Constitution. The President must refer such type of Bill to the legislature of that state.

The Parliament cannot **substitute the state legislature**. Under the President's Rule, only the **essential powers** required to handle the day-to-day affairs of the state can be exercised by Parliament.

The constitutional changes are **"colourable legislation"**. This is an attempt to **disguise the true purpose** and are therefore **legally invalid**.

[10. Don't waste the wastewater](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Don't waste the wastewater"** published in **The Hindu** on **11th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Health**

Relevance: **significance of wastewater surveillance in improving public health**

News: A recently published study in The Lancet Global Health has reiterated the effectiveness of using wastewater for public health surveillance.

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What is wastewater surveillance?

Wastewater surveillance is the process of monitoring wastewater for contaminants. It was originally proposed to monitor the spread of poliovirus and played a role in confirming India's victory over poliovirus.

Recently, it was identified as an approach for tracking the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

What are the advantages of wastewater surveillance for public health?

Wastewater surveillance is effective in detecting known or emerging health threats. It is a cost-effective approach that does not rely on invasive samples from individuals with clinical symptoms.

However, despite the improvements made in public health surveillance system in India, it still faces many implementation challenges.

According to a report by Niti Aayog, the public health surveillance system suffers from uneven coverage and fragmented disease-specific efforts.

How can wastewater surveillance be effectively implemented in India?

Wastewater surveillance in India could involve analysis of samples from varied sources such as wastewater ponds in rural areas and centralised sewage systems in urban localities.

These samples would then undergo testing in laboratories to identify disease-causing agents such as genetic fragments of bacteria or viruses.

The data could be integrated with other health data sources to provide real-time insights into community-level disease patterns, sometimes even earlier than clinical data.

Moreover, the integration of wastewater surveillance into existing surveillance mechanisms has the potential to enhance India's epidemiological capabilities.

How can the integration of wastewater surveillance into existing surveillance mechanisms enhance India's epidemiological capabilities?

Strengthening public health laboratory could strengthen the capacity to detect diseases at an early stage, particularly in areas with limited access to healthcare facilities and diagnostic testing.

Additionally, the [Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission](#), offers an opportunity for the integration of wastewater surveillance. This integration can enable real-time tracking of disease spread and enhance targeted public health responses.

Further, **the success of wastewater surveillance relies on effective data sharing, domestically as well as internationally.**

Domestically, granting health departments at all levels of government access to wastewater surveillance data **can enhance disease monitoring and response capabilities.**

Whereas, **internationally**, sharing this data with global health agencies can **facilitate collaborative efforts in disease tracking and mitigation.**

Must Read: [NITI Aayog releases 'Vision 2035': Public Health Surveillance in India](#)

What efforts have been taken by India in public health and wastewater surveillance?

India has already championed public health surveillance and mobilised resources accordingly. **The integration of wastewater surveillance also aligns well with Niti Aayog's current vision.**

Additionally, **social media surveillance and occupational health surveillance**, are also being recognized as valuable tools in public health surveillance.

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What can be the way ahead?

India's leadership in international platforms like the G20 presents an opportunity to highlight the importance of innovative approaches to disease surveillance, and advocate for enhanced public health surveillance that integrates wastewater sampling.

By actively promoting this agenda, India can call for international commitments and support as well as establish itself as a leader and coordinator in this field.

11. Citizen action for clean politicians, cleaner politics

Source– The post is based on the article “**Citizen action for clean politicians, cleaner politics**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **12th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Issues faced by Indian political system

News- The article talks about criminalisation of politics and the role of money power in the Indian political landscape.

What are some facts and statistics about criminalisation of politics in India?

1,777 Out of the 4,001 MLAs currently in session have criminal cases, which is 44%. The current Lok Sabha has **43% members with criminal cases**.

28% of MLAs have serious criminal cases today. 47 MLAs have **murder cases**, 181 have **attempted murder cases**, 114 have **crimes against women cases**, and 14 have **rape cases**.

The states/Union Territories with highest number of **MLAs with serious crimes cases** are Delhi (53%), Bihar (59%), Maharashtra (39%), Jharkhand (38%), and Uttar Pradesh (38%).

The **candidate with a criminal record** has a **winning chance** over 15%. In comparison, it was 4.7% for those with a **clean record**.

The number of **candidates with criminal records** has increased only because the party leaders continue to give more tickets to them.

In advanced countries, there is no such system of **distributing tickets**. Candidates are selected in a more **open and democratic process**.

Winning is the means to **recover the money** spent and **accumulate it** for the next election.

ECI has taken very **little action** on this.

What shows the role of money power in politics?

The **average assets** of the MLAs were ₹13,63 crore. **Candidates with criminal cases** have average assets of ₹16,36 crore.

Winning depends on wealth. Candidates in Indian Elections are now spending more than the **United States presidential election**. Candidates are **spending public money** to promise freebies like free water, free electricity, free travel, and free food.

Spending on elections is at an all-time high. Money is being spent on clothes, mobile phones, cooking utensils, liquor, and cash for voters

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12. [Message from Madras on POCSO Act](#)

Source: This post has been created based on the article “**Message from Madras**”, published in The Times of India on 12th July, 2023.

Syllabus topic: GS Paper 2 – Government policies for the vulnerable sections of the society

News: Madras High Court recently stated that the cases involving consensual sex between adolescents should be distinguished from actual abuse cases. Therefore, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Juvenile Justice Act, should be reviewed.

The court also stated that criminalizing consensual adolescent sex is against the interest of adolescents.

In 2013, India raised the age of consent from 16 to 18. It led to categorization of cases of sex with individuals below 18 as statutory rape.

What are the issues involved with criminalization of consensual sex?

It negatively impacts family relationships. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), “family problems” and “love affairs” are the main causes of suicides among individuals under 18.

Chief Justice of India Chandrachud has recently urged the **Parliament to reconsider the age of consent**. He highlighted the importance of adolescent health care, stating that teenagers should not be overly burdened by the law.

It results into humiliation of both the accused and the survivor during investigations.

In 2022, the Supreme Court banned the two-finger test, with reason that it adds to the trauma of female survivors. However, the practice continues.

13. [What India can gain from Europe — and Europe from India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “C Raja Mohan writes on PM Modi in Paris: **What India can gain from Europe — and Europe from India**” published in **The Indian Express** on 12th July 2023.

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

News: India’s PM visit to Paris this week is expected to produce new agreements, especially in defense and space, and raise the bilateral strategic partnership to a higher level.

How might India contribute to European Security?

India’s PM visit to Paris may redefine India’s role in global security affairs, particularly with Europe.

India’s contribution during the World Wars is often forgotten. Nearly one million Indian soldiers served in the First World War and two million in the Second World War, playing a vital role in establishing peace in Europe.

This historical engagement could serve as a precedent for a renewed role in European security.

Why has India’s role in global security diminished?

India’s political alignment with the Soviet Union during the Cold War and its subsequent dependence on Russia for security support hampered its global security politics.

India’s strategic autonomy was constrained due to its fear of losing Russia’s backing on the Kashmir issue in the UN Security Council.

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This trend continues as evidenced by India's silence over Russian aggression in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea.

What are the reasons for India to take a fresh look at European security and prospects for renewing India's role?

Changing security landscape in Europe: The NATO summit and the ongoing war in Ukraine, coupled with differing stances on resolving the conflict, call for fresh perspectives. As an emerging global power, India can play a vital role as an impartial mediator in European security matters.

Impact of European security on Asia: The outcomes of the war in Ukraine are expected to have profound consequences for Asian security. "Partnership without limits" unveiled by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping highlights the increasing engagement of Asian countries in European affairs.

Understanding France's stance on China: Understanding French's stance on China, which has generated controversy in Asia, is important for India. France's attempts to de-risk its economic ties with China and diversify its Asian commercial engagement present opportunities for India.

Modernising India's defence industry: France can play a vital role in modernising India's defence industrial base through co-development and co-production of weapons. Strengthening India's defence capabilities, in turn, can help stabilise the balance of power in Asia, indirectly contributing to European security.

Recalibrating India's European strategy: The war in Ukraine offers a rare political incentive for India to recalibrate its European strategy, which has been long influenced by Russia. An integrated view of European security can help India emerge as a valuable interlocutor between the West and Russia.

Engagement with European security institutions: The need to engage deeper with European security institutions prompts India's renewed interest. Working with institutions such as **NATO**, **the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**, **the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN)**, and the intelligence-sharing forum among the EU's national spy agencies, **Club de Berne** can help India play a more active role in global security.

14. [India@75, Looking at 100: Preparing for a digital future](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**India@75, Looking at 100: Preparing for a digital future**" published in Indian Express on 12th July 2023.

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

News: Digital transformation in India is facing some foundation related challenges.

India is witnessing a remarkable digital transformation. It represents the world's second-largest online market, the lowest data rates, and a growing fintech landscape. However, this acceleration has created potential divides, especially in terms of equitable access to technology.

It helped office work and children's education during the pandemic. However, issues in Aadhaar-based digital social security programs, such as biometric mismatches, have resulted in the denial of benefits to some citizens.

How are infrastructure challenges impacting the 'Digital Economy'?

The State of India's Digital Economy Report emphasizes the role of absent analogue foundations that drive the digital economy, including physical and social infrastructure.

Aspects like poor power supply and low literacy levels contribute to an internet usage gap.

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To address these challenges, **the Indian government has set goals to provide 4G network coverage to all villages by 2024** and strengthen digital literacy initiatives.

What are the initiatives taken to strengthen India's 'Digital Ecosystem'?

The Indian government has launched several initiatives, such as **Sanchar Saathi**, to address the ecosystem's vulnerabilities highlighted by increasing cybercrimes and financial frauds.

The impact of digital transformations shouldn't only be measured in the number of new technologies or users but also by how it affects people's lives.

Targets on user numbers and network participants should be expanded to include outcomes on financial security, health benefits, and improved living standards.

What principles should policymakers consider?

As India approaches its 100th year of independence and digital ecosystems become integral to economic growth, four principles are suggested for policymakers.

Firstly, the rush to digitise everything should be stopped, because the basic infrastructure is not ready.

Secondly, consultative policy making is needed, with beneficiaries placed at the heart of the process.

Thirdly, policymakers should focus on creating adaptive policies and agile regulatory frameworks. **Lastly**, policy should be data-driven and evidence-based. The lack of consistent data for meaningful analysis and assessment of the digital ecosystem is a hurdle that needs addressing.

How to ensure the success and sustainability of 'Digital Transformation'?

The success of any transformative process rests on transparency, regular monitoring, and impact assessments. These processes must be institutionalised to build accountability for such significant changes, helping to establish trust and long-term sustainability of the digital transformation.

15. [Let's not have regulatory overlaps on data compliance](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Let's not have regulatory overlaps on data compliance**" published in Live Mint on 12th July, 2023.

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

News: According to recent judgement of Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU), in Europe, it's now legally established that if a company violates data protection laws through abuse of market dominance, competition authorities can assess data protection compliance to determine any breach of competition laws.

How is data protection affecting other regulatory frameworks?

As businesses transition to digital platforms, data protection laws are increasingly superimposed on other legislative frameworks. Traditional regulators are engaging with data protection issues, blurring boundaries and forcing businesses to adjust internal processes to meet multiple, sometimes conflicting, regulatory demands.

What is the conflict between data protection and competition regulation?

The conflict between data protection and competition regulation arises in the digital economy where dominant tech companies collect vast amounts of user data. This gives them a competitive advantage, raising questions about fair competition. Concurrently, it blurs the boundaries of

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traditional regulatory scopes, as competition regulators now have to consider data protection issues in their assessments.

How did European authorities respond to these concerns?

European competition authorities have started investigating Big Tech companies' data advantages for potential anti-competitive implications.

One example was the **German Federal Cartel Office's 2019** investigation into the merged user data of social media platforms, where it found the company violated the EU's data protection law by bundling consent with standard terms and conditions.

The Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) upheld this decision, setting a precedent that allows competition authorities to consider GDPR compliance when determining market dominance abuse.

In anticipation of this, European legislators introduced a provision in the **Digital Markets Act** to prevent large "gatekeeper" online companies from combining user data without explicit consent, further emphasizing the interconnected nature of competition regulation and data protection.

What are the compliance challenges for businesses?

For businesses, regulatory compliance can be a burden, demanding clarity on what actions are required and which regulator to satisfy. With overlapping regulations, organizations face the potential of increased compliance responsibilities, especially when the requirements of different regulators diverge.

What lessons can India learn as it develops a new data protection regime?

As India prepares to enact a new data protection law, the case study of Europe suggests the importance of avoiding regulatory overlaps. Clear boundaries between different regulatory mandates can provide clarity for companies on compliance expectations. In instances of unavoidable overlap, a system is needed to reconcile conflicting regulatory demands.

16. Green washing – Changes to conservation laws must be backed by scientific evidence

Source: The post is based on an article "**Green washing – Changes to conservation laws must be backed by scientific evidence**" published in **The Hindu** on **12th July 2023**.

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

Relevance: concerns with the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023.

News: The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 is currently under discussion by a Joint Committee of Parliament.

What is the present legislation governing the industrial exploitation of forest land?

The Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980 empowers the state to regulate and impose costs on industrial exploitation of forest land.

Further, **SC ruling in the T.N. Godavarman Thirumalpad case (1996)** expanded the scope of protection under the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980 to even non-officially classified forests.

What are the key provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023?

Read Here: [Objections overruled, Forest Bill goes to House unchanged](#)

What are the issues with the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023?

The amendments do not contribute significantly to regenerating natural forests but rather incentivize afforestation for commercial purposes.

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While the concept of grooming private forests may sound appealing in theory, expecting them to serve as a permanent carbon stock is unrealistic, considering the strong market incentives to use them as “carbon credits.”

Read More: [The Forest \(Conservation\) Amendment Bill, 2023 weakens the very purpose of the legislation, which is to protect and conserve India's forests](#)

What is the present status of forest cover in India?

As per the biennial reports of the Forest Survey of India, India's forest cover has seen only marginal increases. The growth in forest cover within officially recorded forests remains stagnant or shows only minor increments.

However, it is tree cover in orchards, plantations and village homesteads that has been on the rise and supplementing India's claim that 24% of its area is under forest and tree cover.

India, as part of its international climate commitments, has committed to increasing this number to 33% and adding a carbon sink of 2.5 billion to 3 billion tons of CO₂ this way, by 2030.

What is the way ahead?

Changes to conservation laws may be necessary. However, due to new climate realities, these changes should be supported by robust scientific evidence.

17. [Bibek Debroy writes: Why normative recommendations of finance commissions remain on paper](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Bibek Debroy writes: Why normative recommendations of finance commissions remain on paper**” published in “The Indian Express ” on 13th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Function and responsibility of various constitutional bodies & GS-3 - Government budgeting

News: The article talks about the work of India's Finance Commissions, which give advice on how money should be moved between the national and state governments. The article says that this advice often doesn't get followed because it's too complicated or not a priority.

What is the Role of Finance Commissions?

Finance Commissions (FCs) in India are established under Article 280 of the Constitution. They primarily handle three responsibilities:

1. Vertical devolution, which involves transferring funds from the Union to states.
2. Horizontal distribution, which concerns distributing funds between states, based on specific formulas.
3. Grant-in-aid, regulated under Article 275, provided to states in need of assistance.

What Was the Impact of the 13th and 15th Finance Commissions?

The 13th FC was set up in 2007 and made recommendations for the period 2010 to 2015. A focus of the 13th FC was on grants-in-aid, which are significant parts of FC transfers.

Two key areas for grant assistance highlighted by the 13th FC were **justice delivery and the statistical system.**

Despite optimistic expectations, the impact in these areas was disappointing. For instance, the FC hoped to dispose of a large number of pending court cases and enhance the justice delivery system with a funding of Rs 2,500 crore. However, the actual outcome was not as expected.

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Similarly, the 15th FC made a number of reform suggestions for both Union and state levels, and performance-based grants. Yet, many of these recommendations, despite being comprehensive, were often ignored.

Why normative recommendations of finance commissions remain on paper?

Lack of compliance: Both the Union and state governments sometimes overlook or ignore the recommendations. They may not agree with them or have other priorities.

Complex reforms: Some of the suggested reforms can be complicated to implement. They require significant changes in government processes and policies.

Resource constraints: The governments, particularly at the state level, might face resource constraints. This can make it hard for them to put the recommendations into practice.

Policy prioritization: The governments often focus more on resource distribution. The recommended reforms may not align with their policy priorities.

Conditionalities: Some states object to the conditions attached to grants. They believe these restrictions limit their expenditure options.

Insufficient data: There can be a lack of necessary data to implement the recommendations. For instance, the 13th FC pointed out statistical gaps that hindered implementation.

Performance-Based Grants: The 15th FC proposed performance-based grants. However, this requires the establishment of clear and efficient performance metrics, which can be challenging.

What should be done?

For better results, the Finance Commission should make recommendations simpler and more practical. It should also work with governments to understand and overcome their challenges.

Governments should prioritize these recommendations, gather needed resources, adjust grant conditions, and fill data gaps.

[18. Express View on SC order on ED chief: State's strong arm](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on SC order on ED chief: State's strong arm**” published in “The Indian Express ” on 13th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Issues associated with the functioning of judiciary – Supreme Court

News: The Supreme Court has made a decision in the case of Sanjay Kumar Mishra. He is the chief of the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The court decided that two extensions to his term were not valid. Mishra must leave his job on July 31. This is four months earlier than planned.

What is the Supreme Court's (SC) view in the Sanjay Kumar Mishra case?

The Supreme Court has shared its opinion on the matter of Enforcement Directorate (ED) chief Sanjay Kumar Mishra's tenure. Here's a simplified breakdown of the Court's perspective:

Separating procedural and political elements: The Supreme Court was cautious in differentiating between the procedural and political aspects in the challenge to Mishra's appointment. It was clear in its stance that while political motivations might be involved, the focus should be on the legal procedures followed or violated.

Unlawful extensions: The Court announced the two tenure extensions received by Mishra as invalid. They instructed him to step down from his position on July 31, much earlier than the end of his original term.

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Parliament's authority to modify laws: The Court upheld the power of Parliament to amend laws. It stated that Parliament has the right to modify laws to extend the tenure of positions like the ED and CBI chief.

Warning against arbitrary power use: The Court also emphasized the importance of not using this power arbitrarily. It suggested that, while Parliament has the authority to change the laws, it should not be done randomly or without good reason.

Specific criticism in Mishra's case: The Court expressed disapproval of how this power was used in the specific case of Mishra. It found fault with the government for extending his tenure, despite a previous Court direction against it.

Rejection of opposition's claims: The Supreme Court declined to consider the Opposition's plea. The Opposition had accused the central government of using the agency for its own political gains, but the Court did not entertain this.

Expectations from the agency: Lastly, the Court placed the onus on the ED to demonstrate its fairness and transparency. It expects the agency to convince its critics about its impartial and honest operations.

19. Christophe Jaffrelot writes: What the Indo-French relationship needs

Source: The post is based on the article

“**Christophe Jaffrelot writes: What the Indo-French relationship needs**” published in The Indian Express on 13th July 2023.

“French Connections” published in “**Times of India**” on 13th July 2023.

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

News: This article discusses the strategic and security-focused relationship between India and France. The article highlights their cooperation in balancing China's influence, conducting joint military operations, forging big defence contracts, and their partnership in nuclear energy. The article also emphasises the future possibilities of their collaboration, like the International Solar Alliance and involvement in regional networks and minilateral forums.

What is the significance of India and France relations?

Economic relations: In the fiscal year 2022-23, the bilateral trade between India and France was valued at \$12.56 billion. Despite this figure, there is potential for growth. Both countries are focusing on the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to bolster their economic ties.

Role in global politics: In the current shifting global political scenario, both India and France can serve as significant balancers. This highlights the importance of their alliance not just bilaterally, but also for global stability.

Strategic and defence significance: India and France share a strong strategic relationship, with France being India's second-most important ally after the US. They are commemorating 25 years of this alliance. Notably, France opposed sanctions on India following its 1998 nuclear test. In terms of defence, France was India's second-largest supplier from 2018 to 2022, accounting for 29% of India's imports. During PM Modi's visit, purchases of 26 Rafale jets and three Scorpene submarines are expected, which will strengthen India's defence capabilities.

Geopolitical importance: The geopolitical landscape has brought India and France even closer. After being excluded from the Trans-Atlantic alliance's AUKUS pact in 2021, France has expanded its engagement with countries like India. This relationship is particularly significant in the Indo-Pacific region, where both countries oppose China's increasing dominance.

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How nuclear and military cooperation between India and France helps in strengthening its relationship?

Nuclear Cooperation: Strengthening Strategic Ties

Providing crucial support: After the US imposed sanctions on India in 1974, France offered crucial support by supplying enriched uranium for the Tarapur nuclear plant. This helped maintain India's nuclear energy capabilities.

Learning from experience: France, having developed its civil nuclear energy sector outside of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), provided valuable guidance for India, which was in a similar situation.

Against global sanctions: Unlike other countries such as the US and Japan, France did not impose sanctions on India following its nuclear test in 1998. This demonstrated solidarity and mutual understanding.

Military Cooperation: Building Trust and Sharing Resources

Sharing military facilities: In 2018, France and India agreed to share access to each other's military facilities, an agreement that demonstrated a high level of trust and understanding between the two countries.

Joint military exercises: The ongoing "Varuna" joint naval exercises have helped strengthen operational cooperation and trust. These exercises include French and Indian naval units working together, which solidifies their military partnership.

Arms supply diversification: France has significantly contributed to India's efforts to diversify its arms suppliers. The 2016 Rafale deal, where India bought 36 aircraft from France, is a noteworthy example of this cooperation.

What are the Future Possibilities for Indo-French Cooperation?

4. India and France need to continue strengthening their strategic and defense partnership, which includes possible procurement of Rafale jets and Scorpene submarines by India.
2. Both countries could give more impetus to the International Solar Alliance to boost global solar energy use, highlighting their commitment to environmental sustainability.
3. They could create more multilateral groups in the Indo-Pacific region, broadening their cooperative network. To counterbalance the influence of China in the Indo-Pacific region, they should intensify their collaboration.
4. France's participation in the Indian Ocean Commission, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association opens avenues for deeper collaboration with India in regional matters.
5. Reviving and strengthening trilateral forums like the France/India/Australia dialogue could enhance their collective regional influence.
6. New multilateral partnerships, like the one between France, India, and the UAE, could be further developed for broader regional cooperation.
5. Economically, there's a need to boost their bilateral trade, which stood at \$12.56 billion in 2022-23. For this, both nations should expedite efforts to actualize an India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

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20. Quiet diplomacy could ease South China Sea tensions

Source– The post is based on the article “**Quiet diplomacy could ease South China Sea tensions**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral and regional groupings

Relevance: India and Philippines relationship

News-. The Foreign Ministers of India and the Philippines met at the fifth meeting of the Philippines-India Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation, in New Delhi, on June 29.

What were the important outcomes of the meeting?

It was decided to open the resident **defence attaché office** in Manila; and **increased cooperation** between the Coast Guards of the two countries.

Both agreed for **acquisition of naval assets** by Manila under a **concessional line of credit** from Delhi; expansion of **training and joint exercises on maritime security and disaster responses** and commencing a **maritime dialogue**.

Most notable development was the agreement on **regional and multilateral issues**, particularly on the South China Sea.

While India restated its consistent stance of adhering to **international law, including the United UNCLOS**, it notably called for the respect of the **2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea**. This marks a departure from India’s previous position.

What was the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in a case related to the South China Sea dispute to address conflicts with China?

The arbitration process considered various aspects, including **maritime rights, the status of specific marine features, historical rights, and the legality of certain Chinese actions** in the South China Sea, which Manila deemed as unlawful.

According to **UNCLOS Article 296I**, the tribunal’s decision is considered “**final and binding**.” The PCA rejected China’s claim of **historical rights in the South China Sea** and the unanimous decision favoured the Philippines.

The tribunal also declared that any previous claims to resources within the “**nine-dash line**” were not grounded on a legal basis.

It concluded that China’s development and land reclamation activities had significantly altered the reefs, which violated its **commitments under UNCLOS**.

The tribunal further criticised China for causing **irreversible damage to the marine environment** and destroying evidence of the natural condition of features in the South China Sea.

The tribunal found China guilty of violating the **Philippines’ sovereign rights in its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** by interfering with fishing and petroleum exploration, constructing artificial islands, and failing to prevent Chinese fishermen from operating in the area.

The tribunal also determined that China had **no legal basis to assert historic rights** to resources within the sea areas falling under the tribunal’s jurisdiction.

What is the importance of the South China Sea?

The South China Sea holds significant importance as a **crucial maritime passageway connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans**. It plays a vital role in **global geopolitics, economy, and strategic interests**.

Maintaining **free and stable maritime routes** is essential for **global trade and the world economy**.

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What is the way forward to resolve the South China Sea conflict?

Despite the ruling by the PCA, the actual situation on the ground remains unchanged, making it practically challenging to enforce the decision.

Recognizing that the South China Sea issue necessitates a **political framework**, dialogue becomes the key to resolving it.

Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) should pursue a **political solution through “quiet diplomacy”** since the prospects of resolving the matter purely through legal means are limited.

The responsibility of establishing a **“political framework”** and making progress towards a legally binding “code of conduct” primarily lies with ASEAN’s leaders. It is essential for ASEAN nations to foster greater understanding and unity among themselves.

21. Is it possible to have partial app bans?

Source– The post is based on the article **“Is it possible to have partial app bans?”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian Polity

Relevance: Right to Internet

News- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has sought inputs on having “selective” app bans instead of internet shutdowns

What is the history of Internet shutdowns in India?

Internet shutdowns are imposed in States and districts across India from time to time to **maintain law and order**.

It has a straining effect on access to education, work, banking, and information. As such, the government has sought to **impose restrictions rather than complete shutdown**.

In **Jammu and Kashmir as well as in Manipur**, authorities have gradually loosened long-term restrictions.

How would the TRAI move work?

The approach suggested by TRAI would require telecom operators and messaging app firms like WhatsApp to **cooperate with each other** and stop access to services during a shutdown.

What are the past efforts towards app regulation?

In 2015 and 2018, the TRAI had **held consultations** on regulating messaging apps.

Telecom operators argued in favour as messaging apps bypass stringent security and surveillance regulations.

However, the Department of Telecommunication (DoT) and the TRAI rejected this argument. Later, **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** amended the **IT Rules, 2021** to trace the original sender of a forwarded message.

What about regulating or blocking VPNs?

The government has been showing **concerns against Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)** because of its **encrypted nature**.

VPN firms usually **route data** through servers located in another country, and change the IP addresses to **evade detection and blocking**.

Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (**CERT-in**) **published directions in 2022** requiring **VPN firms to retain records** of users from India led to shifting of servers located in India.

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However, **Internet rights activists** say that blocking VPNs would be a damaging move for **online privacy specially for journalists, whistle-blowers and activists** as it protects them from surveillance and censorship.

22. Weakening autonomy – on ED's tenure extension

Source– The post is based on the article “**Weakening autonomy**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian Polity

Relevance: Institutional Autonomy

News – Supreme Court's verdict in 2021 to allow **multiple extensions** of service to heads of investigative agencies is a setback.

What is the verdict all about?

The Supreme Court has supported changes made in 2021 that allow heads of investigative agencies to have multiple extensions of their service.

This decision is seen as a **setback to protecting the independence** of these agencies.

However, the court has also cancelled the two one-year extensions given to the **Director of Enforcement, S.K. Mishra**. As a result, Mr. Mishra has been asked to step down on July 31.

The court stated that although Parliament can change the basis for a judgement through legislation, **it cannot nullify a court order**.

Mr. Mishra was appointed for a two-year term in 2018, but in 2020, his appointment was retrospectively changed to a three-year term. Despite being past the retirement age, he received two annual extensions in 2021 and 2022.

The government ignored the court's earlier suggestion that such extensions should only be granted in **exceptional cases**.

What are the impacts of judgements?

The Court's endorsement of a tenure extension system will **undermine their independence** and against the rule of law.

The amendments **violate fundamental rights** as the government can instruct the Directors who can pick and choose what cases to investigate based on political instructions.

It also **offends the rights of citizens** to equal treatment and impartial investigation.

The misuse of government agencies against political opponents.

23. An unacceptable verdict in the constitutional sense

Source: The post is based on the article “**An unacceptable verdict in the constitutional sense**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues related to functioning of Judiciary – Supreme Court

News: The Allahabad High Court recently declined the plea of an inter-faith couple living together, who sought protection from alleged police harassment. The couple claimed that they were being mistreated by local police due to a complaint made by a family member. The court implied that live-in relationships are a “social problem”.

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What is the view of Allahabad High court in Kiran Rawat vs State of UP case?

Perspective on Live-In relationships: The Allahabad High Court viewed live-in relationships as a “social problem”. The court believed that traditional law is biased towards marriage and does not intend to encourage such relationships.

Reference to Supreme Court (SC) verdicts and context: The High Court referred to past SC verdicts on live-in relationships, such as D. Velusamy (2010), Indra Sarma (2013), and Dhanu Lal (2015). However, it argued these verdicts were made in the specific context of their respective cases, not to promote live-in relationships in general.

Interpretation of personal liberty and autonomy: The court’s decision implied that marriage is essential for constitutional protection, seemingly prioritizing social and religious orthodoxy over individual rights. It referenced the Muslim law not recognizing premarital or extramarital sex as an example.

Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.PC): The High Court referred to this section, which pertains to maintenance for wives, not “other women”. This reference was seen as irrelevant to the case at hand, focusing on personal marriage laws instead of the main issue of alleged police harassment.

Final verdict: The High Court denied the couple’s plea for protection, a decision criticized for its disregard of constitutional principles and individual rights. **For example**, the court’s focus on the couple’s live-in status over their fundamental right to not be harassed by police was a point of contention.

What were the previous supreme court judgements on “Live-In Relationships”?

The SC of India has previously shown a progressive stance on live-in relationships. In several verdicts, such as **D. Velusamy (2010)**, **Indra Sarma (2013)**, and **Dhanu Lal (2015)**, the top court acknowledged live-in relationships and asserted that they should not be viewed negatively. It emphasized individual autonomy and personal liberty in these relationships.

The court also clarified in **S. Khushboo vs Kanniammal & Anr. (2010)** that there is no statutory offence when adults willingly engage in sexual relations outside of a marital setting, implying acceptance of live-in relationships.

Why is the judgement seen as unconstitutional?

This judgement is seen as unconstitutional for a few reasons.

Firstly, critics argue that the court prioritized societal norms over the constitutional principles of individual autonomy and personal liberty.

Secondly, the court seems to have ignored Supreme Court verdicts that are binding on all courts as per Article 141 of the Constitution.

Lastly, the judgement relied on personal marriage laws that were not relevant to the case, disregarding the couple’s fundamental right not to be harassed by the police. The court’s decision is viewed as undermining the principle of constitutional morality in personal relations.

What are the impacts of this judgment?

The impact of this judgment can potentially be significant.

- It may deter other couples in live-in relationships from seeking legal protection due to fear of social stigma and judicial bias.
- The judgment could also embolden police or societal harassment of such couples.
- Furthermore, it undermines the precedent set by the Supreme Court regarding personal liberty and autonomy.

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- Lastly, it challenges the constitutional principle of individual freedom and could potentially influence future cases involving live-in relationships and inter-faith couples.

24. [Scientists need the oxygen of free speech](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Scientists need the oxygen of free speech**” published in “The Hindu” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Society, GS 2- Fundamental rights & GS 3- Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

News: Last week, over 500 scientists and academics criticized the Indian Institute of Science for stopping a discussion about the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. In response, the head of the Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research in Mohali issued a warning to two professors who signed the letter.

Why is open discussion important in scientific institutions?

Importance of open discussion in scientific institutions are:

Expression of constitutional rights: Scientists, like all citizens, have the right to participate in societal discussions. It's vital that research institutions respect this constitutional right, thus encouraging free and open conversations.

Educational role: Scientists often enjoy the privilege of public support for their research. This grants them the opportunity to delve deep into complex subjects. By sharing their insights on public interest matters, they uphold their responsibility to educate society. **For instance**, discussing the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act can provide valuable knowledge about its social and legal implications.

Overlapping science and society: Science and society are interlinked, making open discussions even more crucial. Researchers shouldn't limit themselves to purely scientific matters. Rather, they should discuss how science can impact society and politics. For example, climate change research naturally leads to broader discussions about global politics, inequality, and justice.

Promoting social benefit: By involving themselves in social and political discussions, scientists can help ensure that their research benefits society, rather than promoting private profit. This is in line with India's tradition of scientists, like Meghnad Saha and D.D. Kosambi, who engaged with social issues.

Upholding academic freedom: Censorship of discussions in research institutions threatens academic freedom. To safeguard this freedom, scientists must be allowed to express their views, even if they appear controversial or critical of the government.

Which law was used for censorship in this case, and what is the view of the judiciary on it?

The law used for censorship in this case is the **Central Civil Service (Conduct) Rules**, invoked by administrators like those at IISER Mohali. These rules prohibit criticism of the government.

However, the judiciary has expressed a different view. **In 2015, the Allahabad High Court** ruled that these rules do not apply to a Central University.

Furthermore, **the Tripura High Court stated in 2020** that even if these rules apply, they cannot deprive citizens of their fundamental right to free speech. This signifies the judiciary's support for freedom of expression.

What is the impact of censorship on academic freedom?

Censorship in academic institutions, like the instances at the Indian Institute of Science and the Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research Mohali, restricts open dialogue.

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This can severely limit academic freedom. Scientists and academics may become hesitant to discuss important social and political issues, steering critical debate.

What should be done?

- To ensure academic freedom, scientific institutions should resist censorship and encourage open discussions on social and political issues.
- Administrators should avoid preemptive censorship out of fear of government reprisal.
- Scientists, backed by their community, should stand up against any arbitrary use of authority that stifles discussion.
- Upholding the value of free speech will not only protect academic freedom but also foster comprehensive understanding of science's role in society.

25. G N Devy writes: On Uniform Civil Code, intent matters

Source: The post is based on the article “G N Devy writes: On Uniform Civil Code, intent matters” published in “India Express” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- Society & GS 2 – mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

News: The article raises concerns about the [Universal Civil Code](#) (UCC) in India, particularly its potential to overlook diverse cultural customs and linguistic rights, and its inability to address caste inequalities. It emphasizes the need for the UCC to respect diversity and promote genuine equality.

What is the impact of the UCC on Adivasi?

Impact on adivasi Matrimonial Customs: It could change the Adivasi tradition where men move to their wives' houses after marriage. This custom, considered by many as fairer than the traditional practice of women moving to their husbands' houses, may not be recognized under the UCC.

Influence on adivasi women's rights: Adivasi women enjoy significant rights in their communities. For instance, in some Adivasi tribes, the wife can choose to end the marriage in consultation with the community. These rights might be threatened under a uniform civil code that doesn't consider such practices.

Effect on adivasi property rights: Some Adivasi communities follow matrilineal inheritance, where property is passed down to daughters rather than sons. This unique tradition may not be accommodated in the UCC.

Adivasi customary laws and the UCC: Adivasi communities have their own laws and customs, which might not align with the principles of a uniform civil code. The question remains whether the UCC will take these unique practices into account or impose a standard set of laws, regardless of community customs.

What are the major issues with UCC?

Clash of traditional customs and UCC: The UCC might not consider unique customs of various communities, like the Adivasis or the Khasis. For example, Adivasi traditions of matrilineal residence or Khasi women being family heads might not be recognized.

Language recognition issues: Out of hundreds of languages in India, only 22 are protected by the government. The UCC may not recognize the right to speak in one's language as a civil matter.

Handling of caste inequalities: The UCC may not adequately address caste inequalities and discrimination, leaving marginalized groups without proper protection.

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Conflict between religious and civil identity: Religious identity plays a significant role in personal decisions like marriage. A UCC may find it difficult to reconcile this with civil law, leading to potential clashes.

Risk of majoritarian imposition: The UCC could be seen as an attempt to impose majority views on diverse communities. For instance, communities with different customs on marriage or inheritance could be seen as less “nationalistic.”

What should be done?

- The Universal Civil Code (UCC) must respect India’s diversity. It should account for unique customs and traditions of various communities.
- The right to speak in one’s language, a civil matter, should be recognized.
- The UCC needs to address and rectify caste inequalities and discrimination. It must carefully navigate the intersection of religious and civil identities, especially concerning personal decisions like marriage.
- Finally, it’s important that the UCC is not perceived as a majoritarian imposition.
- In summary, it must promote equality and respect diversity to avoid the risk of causing civil strife.

[26. Why India-France ties are strong, what’s the significance of PM Modi’s visit](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**Why India-France ties are strong, what’s the significance of PM Modi’s visit**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and France bilateral relationship

News- PM Modi is on a visit to France.

Why is the partnership between India and France important for India?

Over the past 25 years, four French Presidents and three Indian Prime Ministers have cultivated this relationship.

The **strategic partnership** between the two countries began immediately after India’s nuclear tests. Most Western nations had distanced themselves from New Delhi.

France holds the distinction of being the first country to recognize **India’s strategic significance** following the 1998 nuclear tests.

The partnership between India and France is the **most crucial strategic alliance** for India in Europe. It is characterised by a **complete convergence of interests**.

D.B. Venkatesh Varma described India and France as “**mirror images**” in their **shared pursuit of strategic autonomy** amid **global power dynamics**.

There is a **notable alignment** in their strategic outlooks. France consistently supported India at crucial junctures, including during the civil nuclear negotiations with the United States.

What are the areas of cooperation between India and France?

Defence- The defence relationship between India and France is characterised by **trust and dependability**. Unlike defence deals with the United States, French **defence agreements** come with **no conditions or limitations**.

During the Prime Minister’s visit, it is expected that agreements will be made regarding the acquisition of **26 Rafale-M fighters** for the Indian Navy. **Co-production of three additional Scorpene class submarines** at Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd may be agreed.

France has offered its **Safran engine for the indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircraft**, with a commitment for **complete technology transfer**.

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Climate change– The two countries also collaborate closely on **climate change initiatives**. They signed a Road Map on Green Hydrogen. It aims to **integrate** the French and Indian hydrogen ecosystems to establish a **reliable global supply chain for decarbonized hydrogen**.

In February 2022, Road Map on the **Blue Economy and Ocean Governance** was signed.

Digital technology– There are possibilities for future **cooperation in digital technology**. A potential roadmap could be established for collaboration on **6G, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing**.

An MoU signed recently between **NPCI International Payments Limited and Lyra**, a French payment services provider, may soon enable **UPI and RuPay payments** in Europe.

What shows the convergence of India and France on regional and global issues?

Both India and France value their **strategic autonomy**. Both pursue **independence in their foreign policies** and seek a **multipolar world**.

As per French President, Europe must not get entangled in America's confrontation with China and preserve its **"strategic autonomy"**.

He warned that Europe's **security dependence on the US** could turn European states into **"vassals"** if the **US-China confrontation** escalated. He also pushed the idea of **Europe as a "third superpower"** with **France in the lead**.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its **geopolitical consequences** has brought a new European awareness of the **strategic importance** of India and vice versa.

France has a **better appreciation** than other European states of **New Delhi's position on the war**.

India understands that if there will be a **rapprochement between Europe and Russia**, it will have to be led by France. For this reason, French support will also be critical to a **consensus outcome at the G20 summit**.

France is the only EU state with **territories in the Indo-Pacific**. It could be an important partner for building **maritime domain awareness** and keep an eye on **China's presence in the region**.

27. Data protection Bill: Hiding behind consent

Source– The post is based on the article **"Data protection Bill: Hiding behind consent"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **14th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- e-governance. GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance: Issues related to regulation of data

News-. The Union Cabinet recently approved the [draft Data Protection Bill](#).

What are the issues with the draft data protection Bill?

It appears the objective of the bill is to facilitate **data collection and processing** by the government and private entities rather than addressing the **concerns for data protection**.

SC has recognised privacy as a **fundamental right** of citizens. It has emphasised the importance of **informational self-determination and control** for protecting the **privacy and freedom** of individuals. To ensure these protections, the SC established the standards of determination through three criteria: **legality, legitimacy, and proportionality**.

Legality– Legality entails the existence of **appropriate laws**, particularly for significant **government digital applications like digital surveillance**.

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However, the current Bill seems contradictory. **Section 5 of the latest draft** implies that the proposed Act would permit any purpose **unless explicitly prohibited by law**.

Legitimacy and proportionality– Legitimacy is related to the **obligation of the state** to convey that **proposed digitalization** involves a **valid interest**. Digital application should meet the **test of proportionality**.

There should be a careful balance between the extent to which **Fundamental Rights** might be affected. But there are currently no **established standards** for either of these tests.

Legitimacy is disregarded. There is a lack of clear standards for **determining proportionality**. The draft bill contains the provisions to make **“reasonable efforts”** and implement **“appropriate technical and organisational measures”**.

These are insufficient measures for assessing the **intrusive nature of the digital application** and effectively **balances risks**.

Consent provision– Draft Bill seems to have heavy **reliance on consent**. Individuals need to have an accurate understanding of all the **privacy risks** associated with **complex digital applications**.

In pervasive applications, denying consent may **limit options, create hardships, or impede freedom of expression**.

What are the suggestions for improvement in the draft data protection Bill?

Specific guidelines and criteria are necessary for **conducting risk assessments and determining legitimacy**. These standards cannot be developed without **well-defined guidelines and regulations**.

It should acknowledge the **privacy risks associated with digital applications**.

There are not only the risks of **illegal surveillance, profiling, and unauthorised exposure** of private information. There are also **indirect harms** when data elements are linked together to create **distorted digital representations**.

The measures of **post-violation complaints and penalties** are not adequate for protection. Protection from indirect harms needs to be **ex-ante rather than ex-post**.

Data fiduciaries and data controllers need to have standards for **ex-ante privacy protection and purpose limitation**.

Effective data protection necessitates an **accountability-based framework** rather than one **solely based on consent**. This framework places the responsibility on **data controllers and fiduciaries**, regardless of the **level of consent**, rather than **solely on individuals**.

[28. Out of alignment – On India-UK Bilateral Investment Treaty](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Out of alignment” published in the “The Indian Express” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements

Relevance – Issues related to foreign investment

News – Negotiations are undergoing on the India-UK bilateral investment treaty.

What is the main point of contention in negotiation?

London has conveyed its unease regarding New Delhi’s insistence on including the **“exhaustion of local remedies clause”** in **dispute resolution mechanisms**.

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This clause has played a central role in India's decision to **unilaterally terminate** 68 out of 87 Bilateral Investment Treaties between 2013 and 2019. It has also been a **fundamental aspect of a model BIT** by the Indian government.

Why is the “exhaustion of local remedies clause” problematic?

1) It is impractical to expect foreign investors to rely solely on **local remedies**. The **Indian judicial system** is known for its slow pace.

Policy interventions by the government further **complicate matters**. For example, the Vodafone case lasted 13 years, partly due to the government **retroactively amending tax laws**. This compelled Vodafone to appeal to the **Permanent Court of Arbitration**.

2) Courts and regulators have not consistently upheld **contractual obligations**. In the **dispute between Amazon and Future Group**, the **Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC)** initially ruled in favour of Amazon,

A decision later confirmed by a single-judge Bench of the Delhi High Court. However, **on appeal**, a Division Bench of the same court **favoured Future Group**. But the Supreme Court upheld the **SIAC's decision**.

The government claims that **international arbitration** favours investors over governments. But it is incorrect.

Data from the UNCTAD demonstrates that out of 1,104 known cases of international dispute settlement, 274 rulings were in favour of states, while 212 rulings favoured investors.

What should be the India government's approach towards investment treaties?

India should accept **international arbitration for confidence-boosting of investors**.

It should honour **decisions of arbitration courts**. It will avoid the embarrassment caused by **seizing of Indian assets abroad** by corporations to **enforce arbitral awards**, which occurred in the case of Cairn Energy.

India should not **impose this clause** in **investment treaties**.

[29. Problematic – on EU resolution on Manipur violence](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Problematic**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **15th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2-International relations. **GS3- Security**

Relevance: Internal security matters of India and its international implications

News- Recently, the EU parliament has passed a resolution on Manipur violence.

What are issues with the EU parliament resolution?

The EU Parliament resolution has framed the problem in Manipur on **religious grounds**. It is portrayed as a **Hindus versus Christians issue**.

The fight between the **Hindu-majority Meitei community and the Christian denominated Kuki-Zo community** has led to vandalising of churches and temples. It has given way to this understanding.

Why is India 's response to the EU resolution an overreaction?

India wants **greater economic integration**. It promotes itself as the **representative of a nation committed to democratic, liberal and plural values and the rule of law**. It cannot dismiss scrutiny by like-minded nations.

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India's dismissal of the EU Parliament's resolution on the violence in Manipur shows **colonial mindset**.

Indian politicians have expressed their concerns over **attacks on Hindu temples in Australia** and **racial prejudice** in the U.S. and **anti-immigrant violence** in Europe.

What are the factors responsible for violence in Manipur?

Violence was the result of **erroneous order** passed by a single judge Bench in the Manipur High Court. It includes Meiteis in the **list of Scheduled Tribes in the State**.

It led to **discontent among the Naga community** which is also predominantly Christian by denomination. But, the **ethnic violence** has been limited to actions by militants belonging to the **Kuki-Zo and the Meitei communities**. It was exacerbated by an **ethnic polarisation**.

Socio-economic variances in the "hill" and "valley" areas, has led to distrust. There was an inability of the government led by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh to **manage the situation**.

General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. [Tomato challenge: Hoarding is not as bad as it sounds](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Tomato challenge: Hoarding is not as bad as it sounds**” published in the “**mint**” on **10th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy – Pricing and inflation

Relevance: Issues related to inflation

News- The ministry of consumer affairs announced a ‘**Tomato Grand Challenge**’ with the objective to ensure the availability of tomatoes at fair prices.

What is the popular perception about hoarding?

There is perception is that **holding back supply causes the price to rise**. People form an opinion based on what is visible today and ignore what is likely to happen tomorrow.

People cannot make much sense of **year- on-year price changes**. They tend to have a **recency bias**. People compare today’s prices with those of goods when last purchased.

What are impacts of high inflation on food items?

Relatively low-income families face the brunt of it in terms of household expenditure when these prices shoot up, and without notice.

In contrast, farmers face distress when prices collapse suddenly, resulting in severe losses.

Why hoarding is essential for producers?

Farmers have destroyed excess produce to **avoid a price collapse**. They should have an option to stock the extra produce.

The demand for food products is relatively stable. Variations in supply cause dramatic changes in these prices. Hoarding tends to reduce price volatility.

The release of hoarded produce also lowers tomorrow’s prices when tomorrow comes. This is called ‘**invisible**’ **trade-offs** because what happens tomorrow cannot be seen today.

What is the way forward?

There is need to develop cold storage options for cultivators. These should be **accessible at reasonable** prices. Cultivators should be allowed to decide when to bring their supply to the market.

There is need for creative ideas for developing **integrated supply chain**. Innovative solutions to achieve low-cost cold storage of farm produce and develop an **efficient food processing sector** can be helpful.

2. [Who can dethrone the US dollar?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Who can dethrone the US dollar?**” published in **Business Standard** on **10th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: concerns associated with adopting alternatives payments system against dollars.

News: Countries around the world are taking measures for dedollarization and coming up with alternative transaction mechanisms. However, the factors that make the dollar an international currency must be considered.

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What are the factors that make dollars an international currency?

Read – [De-dollarisation of Trade](#)

What have been the previous attempts to dethrone the dollar?

Japan: During the 1990s, Japan was the second-largest economy in the world, had good institutions, and it commanded confidence from the world on inflation, taxation, and capital controls.

It tried a big “industrial policy” push to establish the Japanese yen as a major international currency. However, the attempt failed.

Euro: After the failure of Japan, the euro emerged as a significant currency and the European Union (EU) began to rival the US as an economic powerhouse.

This gave the euro recognition as an international currency. However, the euro remains a minor player compared to the dominant position of the US dollar.

What measures are being taken by China?

The Chinese government is making efforts **to promote the renminbi as a global currency**. However, China faces more challenges compared to Japan.

China has strict capital controls, similar to India, which restrict the flow of money in and out of the country. The Chinese central bank primarily pegs the renminbi to the US dollar, which means it is not truly an independent exchange rate.

Further, **China lacks confidence in managing inflation and taxation** and it also does not have an appealing financial system that attracts non-resident investors or fundraisers. Hence, this ambition of the Chinese state is likely to go unfulfilled.

What can be the way ahead for India?

First, India has the potential to become a major producer of internationalized financial services.

This can be achieved by implementing the recommendations of the Percy Mistry report on making Mumbai an international financial center and the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission report by Justice Srikrishna.

Second, policymakers should aim to restore the pre-independence era where the rupee was widely trusted and used across South Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia, and East Africa.

This requires maintaining good institutions over a period of 50 years, particularly regarding inflation, taxation, capital controls, and demonetization. **In terms of inflation,** the goal should be to sustain the 4 percent inflation target consistently over a 50-year period.

3. [Express view on extreme weather: Heat is on](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express view on extreme weather: Heat is on**” published in **Indian Express** on 10th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Environment (Climate change)

News: Last week saw global average daily temperatures in a range never seen before. Last Monday, it reached above 17 degrees Celsius. This was the hottest day recorded in history. The record was beaten again on Tuesday, and then on Thursday. More records are expected to be broken in the coming days and weeks. 2023 is likely to be one of the hottest years ever.

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How is climate change progressing?

Climate change is happening as predicted by scientists, but maybe a bit faster. It's not just heat, but also heavy rain, floods, droughts, and wildfires. While these cannot be stopped instantly, governments can act to reduce their impact.

What can be done to tackle heat waves?

Simple interventions can significantly reduce deaths from heat waves. However, many local governments don't have a heat action plan. No area can consider itself safe from heat waves due to their unpredictable nature.

How has heat wave exposure increased over the years?

In 2015, nine states experienced heat waves. By 2020, 23 states were affected. The number of **heat wave days per year increased from seven in 2015 to 33 in 2020.** Last month, eastern UP saw many people hospitalized, and several died due to heat-related diseases. These are the shocks that may repeat if local governments are not prepared.

Why heat waves in the rainy season?

It may seem strange to discuss heat waves during the rainy season. However, **July is one of the four months when heat waves are expected.** Recent trends suggest that heat waves could occur in subsequent months as well. Therefore, it's an ideal time for local governments to prepare for heat emergencies.

4. [The problem with battery electric vehicles](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**The problem with battery electric vehicles**" published in "Indian Express" on 10th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life. & Environmental pollution.

News: Rowan Atkinson, known for his love of cars, expressed his skepticism about the push for electric vehicles (EVs). In a Guardian article, he raised concerns about the environmental impact of manufacturing EVs and the state support for them. He believes this focus on EVs could be problematic if replicated in India.

What are EVs?

Electric Vehicles (EVs) are vehicles that are powered by electricity, instead of traditional fuel sources like gasoline or diesel. They utilize an electric motor for propulsion, and the electricity that powers them is stored in rechargeable batteries. There are several types of EVs, including: Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), and Fuel Cell Vehicles (FCVs)

What are the Issues in promoting the adoption of Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs)?

Upfront subsidy: The effectiveness of state subsidies for BEVs is debated. While they have worked in some markets like Norway, the U.S, and China, they primarily benefit middle and upper-middle classes, who are the typical buyers of BEVs.

Charging network: According to World Bank, Charging infrastructure plays a critical role in EV adoption. India currently has a limited number of public charging stations, making it difficult for BEV owners to find convenient charging options. For instances, as of mid-2022, India has only about 2,000 public charging stations, despite having over a million EVs.

Electricity source: In many countries, electricity for EVs is generated from renewable sources, like, Norway has 99% hydroelectric power. In India, most electricity is still generated from coal-fired thermal plants. Therefore, while BEVs may reduce emissions in cities, they still contribute to pollution at the power generation stage.

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Value chain: India relies heavily on imports for the lithium required to produce Li-ion batteries for BEVs. This dependency presents supply chain risks and could impact the country's ability to meet growing demand for BEVs. For example, demand for Li-ion batteries from India is projected to grow at a CAGR of more than 30% by volume up to 2030.

Note: More than 90% of the global Li production is concentrated in Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia alongside Australia and China, and other key inputs such as cobalt and nickel are mined in the Congo and Indonesia

Variety of technologies: There are other efficient vehicle technologies available apart from BEVs. Focusing too heavily on one technology might limit innovation and the potential benefits from other promising technologies.

What are the new technologies that would be helpful in the push for battery electric vehicles (BEVs)?

Hybrid vehicles: Hybrid technology, which combines an internal combustion engine (ICE) with an electric powertrain, can improve fuel efficiency and doesn't require extensive charging infrastructure like BEVs. However, they still use Li-ion batteries, and their efficiency can drop when using air conditioning, which is often needed in India.

Ethanol and Flex Fuels: Flex fuel vehicles can run on more than one type of fuel, or a mixture of fuels like petrol and ethanol. This technology is currently under commercial deployment in countries like Brazil, Canada, and the US.

Hydrogen Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEVs) and Hydrogen ICE: [Read here](#)

Synthetic fuels: Porsche is developing a synthetic fuel made from carbon dioxide and hydrogen using renewable energy. This approach could extend the lifespan of ICE cars while making them virtually CO₂-neutral. The fuel production is being tested in Chile. From 2026, Formula One will also use synthetic fuel.

What should be done?

To facilitate the transition to EVs, governments must focus on fair subsidy distribution, investing in charging infrastructure, and promoting local battery production. Researching alternative technologies, implementing robust policies, and raising public awareness are crucial. Intermediate technologies can bridge the gap, ensuring safety standards are met, while government and automaker partnerships can incentivize wider EV adoption.

5. [AI's disruptive economic impact, an India check](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**AI's disruptive economic impact, an India check**" published in "The Hindu" on 11th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – science and technology (awareness in the fields of computer)

News:

How has Artificial Intelligence (AI) influenced daily life and business operations?

AI has emerged as an indispensable tool in our daily lives and businesses, contributing to authoring poems, devising pickup lines, and solving complex problems. Large language models and generative AI have spurred global interest in AI advancement. The application of AI extends across various fields, with an increased adoption of AI systems such as ChatGPT.

Are there positive impacts from AI adoption?

Several studies indicate a positive correlation between AI adoption and increased productivity.

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A study by MIT demonstrated how AI tools enhanced worker productivity by 14% and improved consumer satisfaction. It is suggested that AI may not replace employees, but workers using AI may substitute those not skilled enough.

A LinkedIn survey found that 70% of employees in top US companies perceived AI as beneficial to their productivity. Further investments and business restructuring are required to fully utilize AI's potential.

How will AI impact economic growth?

A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts a **global GDP increase of 14% or \$15.7 trillion by 2030 due to AI advancements.**

The Kent A. Clark Center for Global Markets survey showed 44% of US experts and 34% of European experts expect a substantial increase in GDP per capita due to AI.

However, some experts like Professor Nicholas Bloom suggest that AI might not significantly impact per capita GDP.

Could AI Negatively Impact Employment?

Despite its benefits, AI also poses risks, such as labour replacement. Research by Daron Acemoglu and Pascual Restrepo indicates that robot adoption negatively affects employment and wages, particularly for blue-collar workers and those with lower education levels. Automation is associated with wage inequality, particularly in industries undergoing rapid automation.

What are the Prospects for India in the AI era?

India, given its vast population, needs to consider the possible negative impact of AI on employment.

Regulation of AI could deter investments and opportunities, but India can potentially leverage its demographic dividend by focusing on AI education and training, especially as online education gains traction after the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is the Overall Impact of AI?

While the impact of AI on productivity and economic growth is largely positive, its effect on the labour market and societal implications can be challenging.

Many experts agree that AI may bring about significant societal challenges in the labour market, politics, data privacy, crime, and warfare.

There is a need for robust cyber regulations and potentially tax capital to balance the returns from capital and labor and mitigate the displacement effects. Adapting to the ever-evolving AI advancements is crucial to progress.

6. [The strange particle that holds the key to 'quantum supercomputer](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**The strange particle that holds the key to quantum supercomputer**" published in "The Hindu" on 11th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – science and technology (awareness in the fields of computer)

News: Researchers from Microsoft reported engineering a topological superconductor made of an aluminum superconductor and an indium arsenide semiconductor.

What does the term 'Majorana' mean?

'Majorana' refers to fermions that are their own antiparticles, as proposed by the Italian physicist Ettore Majorana in 1937. These particles satisfy certain conditions under the Dirac equation, originally developed by the British physicist Paul Dirac in 1928 to incorporate quantum mechanics with special relativity. The equation predicts that each particle has a corresponding

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antiparticle, and Majorana discovered that certain particles could serve as their own antiparticles.

What is Majorana Zero Mode?

Majorana zero modes are a unique kind of particle, a bound state of fermions that are their own antiparticles. These particles have distinct quantum numbers, including quantum spin with half-integer values, such as $1/2$, $3/2$, $5/2$, and so on. The rules applicable to single fermions also apply to these bound pairs. If these bound states encounter each other, they annihilate, justifying their title as Majorana fermions.

What are the benefits of Majorana Zero Mode for Quantum Computing?

Majorana zero modes offer significant benefits to quantum computing. They act as stable qubits, with the unique ability to exist in two states simultaneously, providing a basis for quantum superposition. By encoding information into these modes, quantum computers can be shielded from decoherence, a typical challenge with these machines. Additionally, these zero modes employ non-Abelian statistics, offering an extra degree of freedom and potentially different outcomes, depending on the order of operations. Consequently, Majorana zero modes could unlock superior quantum computing capabilities, from increased resilience to expanded computational possibilities.

What does 'Topological' mean?

"Topological" refers to properties of a system that remain unchanged even when the system is continuously deformed, such as stretching or twisting, without tearing or gluing. Topological degeneracy is a state in quantum mechanics where multiple configurations can exist at the system's lowest energy. In context of quantum computing, Majorana zero modes can store information across different topological properties and, due to this topological nature, they are more robust to disturbances, making them ideal candidates for qubits in quantum computing.

What are the challenges in realizing Majorana Zero Modes?

First, isolating Majorana zero modes experimentally is extremely challenging due to the precise conditions required. They are expected to exist only in certain types of superconductors, under very specific conditions.

Second, even if isolated, verifying their existence is difficult. Majorana zero modes leave a minimal experimental footprint, making their detection and confirmation problematic.

Third, there's a challenge in maintaining the stability of Majorana zero modes. The stability of these states is extremely sensitive to environmental influences, which could easily disrupt them.

Fourth, the manipulation of Majorana zero modes is not straightforward. It requires highly advanced and controlled experimental techniques, which are currently not fully developed.

Lastly, scaling up from individual Majorana zero modes to a fully functional quantum computer architecture is a monumental task, involving numerous technical and conceptual obstacles.

What new discovery has Microsoft made?

Researchers at Microsoft have reported the engineering of a topological superconductor from an aluminium superconductor and an indium arsenide semiconductor. They claim that their device passed the "topological gap protocol," which suggests a high probability of hosting Majorana zero modes. Microsoft's VP of advanced quantum development stated that the company believes that a quantum supercomputer using these qubits could be built within 10 years and could perform a reliable one million quantum operations per second. Despite this, many experts remain cautious and believe that independent confirmation of the results is required, and that topological quantum computing could still be at least a century away.

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7. [Second moonshot – On Chandrayaan-3 mission](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Second moonshot**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Science & Technology**

Relevance: **Significance of Chandrayaan-3 mission**

News: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch the Chandrayaan-3 mission to the moon on July 14.

About Chandrayaan-3 Mission

Read Here: [Chandrayaan-3 successfully completes crucial test and Chandrayaan-3 integrated with launch vehicle LVM3](#)

The mission has six scientific payloads to study the various features of the moon.

ISRO has strengthened the lander’s legs, lowered its minimum thrust, enhanced the availability of power, and upgraded the landing sequence to increase the chances of a successful mission.

What is the significance of Chandrayaan-3 Mission?

First, a successful mission will demonstrate the country’s capabilities in relevant technologies.

Second, a successful mission would also position India as the second country to achieve a soft moon landing.

Third, the mission holds significant importance, as establishing permanent moon bases has become a geopolitical goal worldwide.

Fourth, the success of Chandrayaan-3 will also make it the first surface mission closest to the lunar south pole, a region of the moon that has been found to be geologically unique.

Fifth, a seventh instrument, on the propulsion module, will profile the signs of life on earth to help scientists look for similar signs on planets beyond the solar system.

Sixth, on the eve of the [Artemis Accord](#), where the US is leading lunar research missions while China and Russia collaborating on an ‘International Lunar Research Station,’ Chandrayaan-3 is critical for India’s recognition globally.

Overall, Chandrayaan-3 provides India with an opportunity to lead the global response to the moon’s increasing scientific and political significance.

8. [Improving Pensions](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Improving Pensions**” published in the “**Business Standard**” on **11th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3-Economy

Relevance: Issues related to financial system

News- The article explains the issues related to pension funds in India.

What are the issues related to pension funds in India?

Return on investment– The majority of the funds are composed of **investment returns**. But, **long-term real returns** on debt instruments are relatively low.

There are two primary reasons for this. Firstly, banks in India are required to maintain a **statutory liquidity ratio**. As a result, the demand for these bonds is high. It drives up their prices and consequently **lowering yields**.

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Secondly, in order to stimulate economic growth, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) maintains a **low real repo rate**. This has an impact on overall **returns on investment**.

Risk on investment– Investment returns also come with **certain risks**. **Inflation risk** is the first one. It can diminish the **real value of the corpus** held by pension funds. The second risk is **interest rate risk**. It can cause **significant fluctuations** in **bond and equity prices**, affecting pension funds.

Another risk is the potential change in **market sentiment**. Both **equity and bond prices** can fluctuate for prolonged periods. This poses risks to pension funds.

Dependence on authorities– The risks associated with investments depend on the **actions of public authorities**. Asset markets do not operate independently.

They function within a **macroeconomic policy and regulatory framework**. If these policies and regulations are not appropriate, investment risks can be very high.

Suitable changes in **policy and regulations** can help **mitigate risks** and improve the **gains for pension funds**.

Furthermore, the **repo rate** is a **key policy tool** used by the RBI to maintain **macroeconomic stability**. This rate undergoes significant changes over an economic cycle.

It affects interest rates in the broader economy. However, there is often an **overreaction in asset markets**, posing risks to pension funds.

Regulatory framework– There are also concerns related to the **regulatory framework governing investments**. One key issue is the **absence of regulations** addressing the **pervasive role of market sentiment**.

9. Floods in India

Source– The post is based on the article “**Express view on monsoon-battered India: Weathering it out**” published in “**The Indian Express**” and “**Fury of floods**” published in the “**Business Standard**” on **12th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Disaster management

News- The article explains the issue of increasing flooding events in India in recent years.

How rainfall patterns during the monsoon season have shown a distinct change in recent years?

Most parts of the country have witnessed **intense bursts of rain, with relatively dry spells**.

After the Uttarakhand disaster of 2013, India is experiencing at least **one intense rainfall event** that has resulted in **large-scale flooding**.

Examples are floods in Chennai in 2015, Kerala in 2018, Bihar in 2019, Bengaluru last year, Assam almost every year.

What are some facts about flood vulnerable areas in India?

As per **National Flood Commission in its 1980 report**, the country’s overall **flood-prone area** is **40 million hectares, or 12 percent of the total geographical area**. It has since expanded to over **50 million hectares**.

Flash floods are now common in places that were earlier not considered **flood-prone earlier**. The **arid zones in Rajasthan and parts of Gujarat** are typical examples.

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The “**flood vulnerability index**” of the **National Disaster Management Authority** has identified Punjab, Haryana, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Assam, Gujarat and Odisha as the states most susceptible to floods.

As per the **National Remote Sensing Centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation**, there exist several new stretches in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal that are **prone to flooding** after heavy rain.

The hilly states in Himalayan range are **susceptible to floods** due to **landslides, subsidence, and re-routing of the natural course of rivers and water channels**.

What are the reasons behind the increase in flooding events?

As India’s cities expanded, there was **encroachment of natural water sinks** such as wetlands, marshes and lakes.

In most of the country, **storm water drains** that were planned decades ago are still **locked in networks**. **Inadequate municipal administration** worsens the situation and drains are **almost always blocked**.

This means that too much rainwater gets **trapped within a city’s borders**. For example, the **storm water drains in Delhi** can’t handle the 153 mm of rain that Delhi received over the past weekend.

There is a lack of **pre-emptive moves** to mitigate the floods. Flood control by **multipurpose irrigation-cum-hydro-power projects** and other water management programmes in the past is not in practice. No new projects were started in the recent past.

Existing dams have become **bane** due to **unregulated and uncoordinated water releases** from these structures. It leads to flooding in many areas in **central and peninsular India**.

Deforestation and global warming have led to cloudbursts, cyclones, and have aggravated the **flood risk**.

Soil erosion lowers its capacity to **soak rainwater**. Besides, there is **denudation of vegetative cover** in river catchments. It has increased the **load of sediments** in riverbeds and reduced their **water-carrying capacity**.

There is **encroachment of natural floodplains** of rivers. It has lowered their ability to act as **natural buffers against floods**.

Unplanned expansion of habitation, and indiscriminate disposal of garbage and other urban waste is also responsible for flooding.

What is the way forward for flood management?

Relief efforts need to be stepped up. There is a need for a **proactive policy against climate vagaries**.

There are requirements for **different strategies for urban floods**.

There is a need for a **holistic approach** to address the menace of recurring floods. The government can set up an **experts’ panel to prepare a national flood control plan**.

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10. The rise of revenue department

Source: This post has been created based on the article “The rise of revenue department”, published in Business Standard on 12th July, 2023.

Syllabus topic: GS Paper 3 – Mobilization of resources and associated issues

News: The recent multiple changes made by the Indian government to the Tax Collection at Source (TCS) system depicts a troubling shift in the revenue department’s approach to tax initiatives.

Although India’s tax system needs a more transparency, minimized discretion, and improved ease for taxpayers, it seems revenue department is returning to pre-reform practices. It is imposing unfriendly tax laws.

What are the recent changes made to the taxation system by the government?

on February 1, government announced all Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) remittances would be subject to the tax collection at source (TCS). TCS rate was increased from 5% to 20% for both LRS remittances and overseas tour packages.

On May, government announced removal of differential treatment for credit cards for international transactions. This meant that credit card payments for foreign exchange bills would also attract a 20% TCS.

The third change announced last month rolled back the changes. For all remittances under the LRS and overseas tour packages, the TCS rate became zero for amounts up to ₹7 lakh per individual per year. It also exempted overseas credit card transactions from the LRS.

What are the critical arguments against these moves?

TCS rate was initially justified as a means for the government to monitor transactions. However, Banking records could already provide a trail for the tax department to monitor for tax evasion.

It shows that revenue department has been experimenting with unfriendly tax initiatives.

It also indicates returning to old practices that had been reduced after the economic reforms of the 1990s. These reforms included significant cuts in import duties, reduction and rationalization of direct taxes, and the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST).

The changes to the TCS for LRS remittances suggest a return to pre-reform practices.

11. It is unfair to blame survey methodology when results disagree with a view point

Source: The post is based on the article “It is unfair to blame survey methodology when results disagree with a view point” published in **The Indian Express** on 12th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Growth & Development, Planning

Relevance: concerns associated with various surveys conducted in India

News: In a recent article titled “The sample is wrong,” **Shamika Ravi, a member of the PM’s Economic Advisory Council**, expressed concerns about national surveys in India. However, it is not a correct picture.

What concerns were highlighted by Shamika Ravi?

Under-Representation: She argued that indicators used by the National Sample Survey (NSS) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have failed to capture the true progress of India, and they express concerns about the deterioration of the official statistical system.

The overestimation of the rural population in national surveys conducted by NSS and NFHS (National Family Health Survey) is cited as an example of this shortcoming.

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However, the national data gathering system has gone to great lengths to make the samples statistically representative.

For instance, separate samples are drawn for rural and urban areas, and any excluded geographical regions are clearly specified for reasons beyond the organization's control.

Moreover, the population estimates derived from the NSS have consistently been lower than the numbers reported by the Census or its projected figures.

Although this disparity has been investigated in the past, **no specific faults in the survey methodology have been identified.**

Share of the Rural Population: Shamika Ravi further argued that the share of rural population estimated by NSS/NFHS post 2011 Census is much higher than the projected share of rural population from the Census.

However, **population projection is based on assumptions** on fertility, mortality and migration using appropriate statistical models.

The urban population is projected using the urban-rural growth differential (**URGD**) from the period 2001-2011, which implicitly takes into account increases both in statutory and Census towns.

Moreover, **the primary objective of the NSS and other survey agencies is to generate statistically valid estimates separately for rural and urban areas.**

They typically report percentage values rather than absolute numbers across different categories. **Their methodologies are not designed to estimate the population size in the survey year.**

Conservative in Urban Projections: Shamika Ravi argues that the Census has been conservative in its urban projections as India achieved the urbanisation level projected for 2016 in 2011.

However, using the method of URGD, even the United Nations (UN) has projected a much higher share of urban population in India.

It is also worth noting that the last Census data is over 13 years old, and despite several representations, the Registrar General of India (RGI) has not made efforts to reassess its urban projections.

Response Deficits: Shamika Ravi observes a relationship between response deficits in surveys and wealth levels. It is true that household surveys are becoming difficult due to non-cooperation of households and non-access to richer households in urban areas.

However, the NSS utilizes a substitution method for non-cooperating households, ensuring a near 100 percent response rate. Hence, the observation that the response rate of men falls significantly with wealth needs investigation.

What is the way ahead?

Sampling theory and practice is a scientific discipline. Even some of the surveys conducted by MOSPI have also been found to be of indifferent quality due to engagement of outside agencies.

Hence, it is unjust to solely blame the survey methodology when survey estimates diverge from a particular narrative.

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[12. How the CPI basket conceals the inflation picture](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**How the CPI basket conceals the inflation picture**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Growth & Development, Monetary Policy**

Relevance: **concerns associated with the calculation of CPI**

News The article discusses the issues present in calculating the Consumer Price Index (**CPI**).

What are the issues present with the CPI basket?

Inclusion of Outdated Items: The CPI still monitors a wide range of items, including outdated technologies like torches, radios, tape recorders, CDs, DVDs, etc.

These items have minimal significance in the overall CPI calculation and no longer reflect our current consumption patterns.

Over-reliance on Food Inflation: The weightage of food in the CPI basket has decreased from 60.9 (in 1960) to 57.0 (in 1982) and to 46.2 (in 2001). This gradual decline indicates that as the economy/income grows, the proportion of income spent on food decreases. **This trend is known as Engel’s Law.**

However, India still has a significant weightage of food in the CPI. This over-reliance on food inflation distinguishes Indian inflation from many other developed countries where the food weight is much smaller.

This shift in the developed countries imply that as people’s income rises, they tend to allocate a larger proportion of their spending towards non-food items such as housing, education, healthcare, personal care, etc.

Excessive Weightage to Cereals: Cereals are assigned excessively high weight of 9.67 in the CPI basket. This raises two issues –

- as economies grow and societies evolve, people’s eating habits diversify. This includes moving towards a broader range of nutrient-rich options beyond cereals. This shift in food consumption patterns would have naturally occurred over the past decade, reducing the relative expenditure on cereals.
- the [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana](#) has significantly decreased cereal expenses for a large segment of the population, potentially modifying consumption patterns and further reducing the relative expenditure on cereals.

Despite these changes, cereals still have excessive weightage in the CPI basket.

However, even though current evolving pattern of consumptions are included in the CPI, challenges would still remain.

What are the challenges present with updating CPI?

Weights for CPI can only undergo a significant shift after data from the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (**CES**) is available.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (**MoSPI**) is currently conducting the CES, with the first round scheduled to conclude in July 2023 and the second round a year later in July 2024.

However, **even when the CES results are published around December 2024, creating a new CPI based on this fresh data will take several more months.**

Therefore, till then we will continue to rely on outdated parameters to assess inflation. **This affects the accuracy of measuring the cost of living and economic well-being.**

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Moreover, **the lack of the CES data has resulted in various issues such as – a)** it has become difficult to determine the population under the poverty line accurately, and **b)** tracking inflation effectively.

What can be the way ahead?

It is crucial for the MoSPI to address these gaps promptly. **Efficient data processing should be prioritized without compromise.**

13. Needed: Alert systems for the growing threat of humid heat

Source: The post is based on an article “Needed: Alert systems for the growing threat of humid heat” published in **Live Mint** on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster Management

Relevance: concerns over rising heat related deaths

News: June was the Earth’s hottest month ever recorded. This has raised concerns over rising heat and its implications.

What are the concerns over rising temperatures?

Due to the rising temperature, heat related deaths have increased. **According to a 2021 paper in the Lancet**, about 469,000 people worldwide died from overheating.

Why do people die from heat?

Heat can be deadly because our bodies are composed of cells protected by membranes that can melt under extreme temperatures. Moreover, despite being warm-blooded, our bodies need to maintain a core temperature of around 36.6° C.

Our bodies cool down by sending blood to the skin, where it releases heat into the air. However, **this process becomes less effective when the air temperature reaches around 35° C**, and sweating becomes necessary to cool off.

The evaporation of sweat cools us down. **However, when humidity is too high, sweat fails to evaporate, causing sweat drips and preventing effective cooling.**

Furthermore, with 100% humidity and an air temperature of 35° C, humans can begin to experience the effects of their own body heat, and individuals who are more vulnerable can suffer from heatstroke at lower temperatures.

Moreover, the elderly and individuals with heart conditions are at greater risk of heart attacks as the body’s cooling mechanisms can create cardiovascular stress if pushed too hard.

Further, once the core body temperature rises above 40° C, the situation becomes dangerous, and if it goes above 41° C, heatstroke can be fatal.

People can adapt to heat over time by spending a few days in a hot environment. However, prolonged exposure to extreme heat can overpower these adaptive responses.

Moreover, factors such as humidity, wind velocity and direct exposure to sunlight, a person’s level of exertion, body size and clothes determine the severity of heat.

Must Read: [Heat strokes in India: Reasons and Impacts – Explained](#)

What preventive measures can be adopted to prevent heat related deaths?

Ollie Jay, a health researcher in Australia has developed a five-level ‘heat stress’ warning scale to notify people about the danger of heat.

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This scale takes into account factors such as temperature, wind, sun exposure, and humidity to warn individuals when these conditions combine to create a deadly situation. **Alerts could be sent to phones and sent out on television.**

Adopting a science-based heat-risk scale can also inform workers about dangerous conditions and require employers to provide breaks for outdoor workers when their lives are at risk.

Jay further suggested that providing air conditioning for everyone is not a viable solution, as it contributes to heat generation in crowded cities, consumes significant energy, and emits carbon emissions.

Therefore, **ACs should be established in common spaces** like libraries and develop systems to transport vulnerable people to these locations during heatwaves.

What can be the way ahead?

Due to the rising global warming, city officials will need to adopt heat warning systems, establish public cooling centers, and enforce science-based regulations to prevent heat-related fatalities.

14. The China traps

Source- The post is based on the article **“The China traps”** published in the **“Business Standard”** on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Chinese growth story and lessons for India

News- There is some disconnect between how China’s position as an economic power is portrayed and its actual trajectory.

What is the current economic scenario in China?

The Chinese economy’s recovery from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic has been weak. Retail inflation had fallen monthly. The Chinese economy is facing deflation, driven by low demand and shrinking manufacturing output.

Over 20 percent of the mainland’s workers under the age of 24 in China were unemployed. This is a higher rate than in most comparable economies.

What are simultaneous and interlinked economic traps faced by the Chinese economy?

One of these is the **deflationary trap**, where the economy struggles with declining prices and a lack of consumer spending.

Another challenge is the **investment trap**. Policymakers have limited options to stimulate growth and employment. They are mainly relying on increasing public investment.

However, the returns on additional investment are diminishing, and the country already has a high level of public debt.

To address these challenges, it would require a significant structural shift in the economy, such as promoting private consumption over fixed investment. However, the Communist Party is hesitant to undertake such changes due to the political implications they may entail.

China also faces the hurdle known as the **“middle-income trap,”**. It occurs when a country reaches a certain level of income and development but struggles to progress further.

The mainland’s youth unemployment problem is a manifestation of this trap. Tech and start-up sector, which could have provided opportunities for young people, is not growing at the required pace.

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What are lessons for India?

The current scenario is a result of deliberate decisions made by Beijing. It holds significant policy implications for New Delhi.

The decline of China's tech sector due to a crackdown enforced by Party officials serves as a reminder of the risks associated with politically motivated and arbitrary regulations.

India must exert greater efforts to establish its regulatory framework as independent and impartial.

It is crucial for India's economy not to become overly reliant on public investment decisions. Maintaining fiscal responsibility and actively working towards reducing debt should also remain key priorities for India.

15. Unfair taxation in the name of climate action

Source: The post is based on the article “**Unfair taxation in the name of climate action**” published in **Business Standard** on **14th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Environment – Climate Change**

Relevance: **concerns associated with levying emission related taxes**

News: Rich countries have proposed global tax and tariff to mobilize finance for climate change. These taxes will harm the developing countries.

What are some of the taxation measures being adopted by rich countries?

Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM): There are many flaws with CBAM –

- In the short run, this will generate more revenue for the EU and/or force exporters to squeeze their profit margins and wages to reduce costs.
- A tariff on an externality only alleviates if it is applied at the source of the externality, but the tariff in this case is imposed at the point of sale.
- The data needed to accurately assess and compare emissions is also contentious.
- CBAM mainly targets raw materials rather than finished goods. It will disproportionately affect countries in Africa and the European neighborhood that are not significant historical or present-day polluters.

A proposed tax on Carbon Emissions from Shipping: It is based on the argument that shipping services are underpriced as no account is taken of their carbon emissions. Therefore, the tax can reduce emissions either by reducing shipping movements or by promoting switching to alternative low-carbon shipping technologies.

However, the immediate impact of the tax will depend on the demand elasticity for shipping.

If demand is inelastic, there will be no significant short-term reduction in emissions. Instead, it will increase the cost of shipping goods, and the burden of this tax will be passed on to consumers.

Moreover, the tax will discriminate against island states and importers of bulk goods, including fuels, agricultural goods, and essential minerals. It will also discriminate against countries seeking to industrialize through export-led growth.

The tax revenues will primarily only benefit the top 10 shipping countries, which are predominantly high-income economies.

What measures are being adopted by rich countries to mitigate the effect of such taxes on developing countries?

First, rich countries have proposed measures of giving developing countries some of the money raised from these taxes.

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However, **it is the poorer countries themselves that will bear the burden of these taxes as well as be part of financing such transfers.**

Second, the other proposal adopted by rich countries involves **subsidizing the transition of these countries to lower carbon technologies.**

However, if this transition were fully supported through grant finance, there would be no need for these tariffs.

What can be the way ahead?

Rich countries are neither willing to take retroactive responsibility for carbon emissions nor provide grant and concessional finance in substantial measure to tackle the problem in contemporary times.

Hence, **by adopting such taxation measures they only tend to hinder the development of poor countries.**

16. Protect rural incomes to tackle the current food security threat

Source: The post is based on the article **“Protect rural incomes to tackle the current food security threat”** published in **Live Mint** on **14th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Agriculture – Issues of Buffer Stocks & Food Security**

Relevance: **concerns with rising food inflation**

News: Recently, the National Statistical Office has released the retail inflation data.

What are the key highlights of the retail inflation data?

The data shows a moderate rise in inflation to 4.81% in June from 4.3% last month. However, despite the increase, this rate is within India’s tolerance band.

Further, **food inflation has climbed to 4.49% from 2.96%, which is a cause for concern for the government.**

What has caused the rise in food inflation?

Analysis of consumer price index (CPI) data shows that **the foodgrain group contributed the most to the rise in food inflation.**

For instance, cereal inflation stands at 13%, with both rice and wheat experiencing 12% inflation. Arhar (tur), the dominant pulse item also shows inflation of 27%.

Therefore, the concern lies with the rising foodgrain inflation, particularly for cereals and pulses.

What are the concerns present with food grains?

Wheat: Wheat inflation has remained in double digits for over a year. The government was able to procure only 26 million tonnes of wheat against a target of 34 million tonnes, which shows less wheat supply in the market.

Wheat prices have remained high despite massive open market operations by the government before the procurement season. This brings concern that wheat supply may not be as high as projected.

As a result of low procurement this year and the last, **wheat stocks are barely sufficient to meet the needs of the Public Distribution System (PDS)**. It leaves little scope for further market intervention.

Rice: Despite the government holding sufficient stocks, **regional spread of the monsoon has raised concerns.**

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While there has been above -average rainfall in north-west India, there is a deficit in the rest of the country. This excess rainfall in northwestern India has caused floods which may affect rice crops.

Whereas a deficit in rainfall in eastern and peninsular India may result in lower output of rice in the kharif season.

Pulses: There are problems with pulses. Arhar sowing this year is lower by almost 10%. Even oilseeds sowing is down by more than 10%, with soybean sowing falling 14%.

What can be the implications of inflation in food grains?

The inflation in food grains **may affect other food items like milk.**

Further, as food grains have a significant weight in the consumption basket, the **rising prices are likely to squeeze demand for other commodities.** Therefore, government intervention is necessary to protect the income of farmers.

What measures can be taken by the government?

While food security interventions, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), can provide some relief, a more comprehensive strategy is required to protect the rural economy.

This will require the government to step up public spending to generate demand in the economy, raise incomes and create non-farm employment.

[17. Express View on Chandrayaan-3: To moon, with love](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on Chandrayaan-3: To moon, with love**” published in “India Express” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Awareness in the field of space

News: India is preparing for its second moon landing mission, Chandrayaan-3. This mission comes after the first attempt with Chandrayaan-2 in 2019, which ended in a crash-landing. The ISRO team has made improvements to prevent a similar outcome.

What is the significance of Chandrayaan-3?

The hope and expectations of a nation: Over a billion Indians are following Chandrayaan-3's journey with hope and optimism. They are tracking its path to the moon and the planned soft-landing in late August. This mission carries the dreams of a nation aiming for space success.

A rebound from past disappointments: Chandrayaan-3 is significant as it represents a comeback after the disappointment of Chandrayaan-2. This mission is a chance for ISRO to learn from past failures and make advancements in space exploration.

A stepping stone to greater achievements: The Chandrayaan-3 mission is not just about reaching the moon. It's a stepping stone to bigger space adventures. Successful landing on the moon would unlock new opportunities for ISRO and pave the way for future missions like Gaganyaan, and others to the Sun and Venus.

Boost to India's space status: A successful Chandrayaan-3 mission would reaffirm India's position among top space-faring nations. It could lead to increased collaboration with other international space agencies, bolstering ISRO's global standing.

What's the role of private sector in India's space ambitions?

Private sector's new role in India's space industry: The Indian government has opened up the space sector for private companies. This marks a new phase for the country's space ambitions.

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Allowing ISRO to focus on research and exploration: By involving private companies, ISRO can focus more on space research and exploration. This way, ISRO can dedicate its resources to significant missions like Chandrayaan-3 and others in the future.

Providing routine services in space sector: Private companies will take care of routine services in the space sector. These services could include launching satellites and other operations.

Creating a space technology ecosystem: The entry of private companies helps to create a broader space technology ecosystem. This ecosystem can support the development and growth of India's space ambitions.

Boosting talent and resource base: With private sector involvement, there's a chance to expand the talent and resource base in the space sector. More people and resources can aid ISRO in its future missions.

How can Chandrayaan-3 impact the future of ISRO?

Potential for learning and growth: [Chandrayaan-3](#) can offer ISRO valuable experience and lessons, helping it to grow. Learning from the mission can aid future endeavors like the Gaganyaan project or missions to study the Sun and Venus.

Reaffirming India's place in space: The success of Chandrayaan-3 would confirm India's place among top space-faring nations. It could encourage more global collaborations, like with NASA or the European Space Agency.

Boosting confidence in future missions: If successful, Chandrayaan-3 can build confidence for future ISRO missions. A successful moon landing can reassure the team and the nation about the feasibility of future ambitious projects.

Attracting more support: Success with Chandrayaan-3 could attract more support, including funding and talent, for ISRO's future missions.

18. [Waiting For Another Gamble – on taxing gambling industry](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "Waiting For Another Gamble" published in "The Times of India" on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian Economy – Mobilisation of Resources

Relevance- Taxation issues related to gaming industry

News- The government has proposed a tax rate of 28% on gaming industry.

What is the policy approach of the government to activities that are not regulated but are emerging very fast?

Except for Goa and Sikkim, where casinos are established as tourist attractions, there appears to be an **unspoken policy consensus** across states and political parties.

If an activity cannot be **effectively regulated**, excessively **high taxation rates** are applied. This approach has been observed for **cryptocurrency trading** and is now being applied to **online gaming**.

What will be the impact of the government 's decision to tax the gaming industry?

Presently, cryptocurrency traders are resorting to **offshore online exchanges**. Gamers are likely to find **similar means**. This will result in a **loss of foreign exchange** and hinder the enforcement of **anti-money laundering regulations**.

Multiple high court rulings have addressed the **debate between skill and chance in gaming**, and **taxation methods** applicable to online games. Despite these rulings, the gaming ecosystem is still **facing uncertainty**.

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The proposed tax changes will not impact **horse racing**. Casinos will be adversely affected. State governments may attempt to alleviate the blow by reducing the state component of the tax.

Online games that involve prize money, such as rummy, will be **heavily impacted**, even though the courts had classified them as games of skill.

Games like “**teen patti**” and **casual games funded through advertising revenue** are expected to remain **largely unaffected**.

Many gaming companies will face **financial challenges** and could become unviable.

What could have been a better approach?

To mitigate the detrimental effects of gambling, it would have been suitable to implement measures such as **setting betting limits** based on gamers’ income proofs and **conducting ID verifications**.

Additionally, systems could be established to **exclude gamers with substantial losses**.

The regulation of gambling falls under the jurisdiction of state governments. According to the regulations, games that are primarily based on **chance and involve cash rewards** are **generally prohibited** unless expressly permitted by a state government.

Skill-based games receive some level of protection. It would be unfair to **impose heavy taxation** on these games. Taxation should not be imposed on the full-face value of these games.

19. [Back to the new-old: West wind, East wind, or the warnings of a storm?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Back to the new-old: West wind, East wind, or the warnings of a storm?**” published in **Business Standard** on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Growth & Development, Industrial Policy

Relevance: concerns associated with protectionist measures adopted by countries against China.

News: India implemented economic reforms in 1991. It was influenced by the **Reagan-Thatcher era**, which focused on reduced governmental role in the economy.

What were the results of implementing the 1991 reforms?

The reforms of 1991 were driven by the principles of liberalization, privatization, and globalization (**LPG**).

The aim was to increase market orientation and stimulate economic growth, lower inflation, improve the trade balance, and ensure external economic viability. **The reform was successful in achieving these objectives.**

However, **the reform has not been able to boost manufacturing.**

What are the consequences of the failure of reforms in boosting the manufacturing sector?

It has resulted in a lack of quality jobs, increased inequality and **made India vulnerable to China** by depending on it for strategic material imports.

To reduce its vulnerability, **India has adopted a more restrictive approach to trade** by implementing tariff hikes, non-tariff barriers, and restrictions on Chinese products.

This has given re-birth of government-directed industrial investment through policy tools like Investment subsidies, production incentives, tariff protection, etc.

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How is the situation of manufacturing in the US and in the Western countries?

The US and countries in the West have also faced similar outcomes due to their incapability in reviving the manufacturing sector.

Hence, to decrease their vulnerability to China, **companies in the West have started investing in the US and establishing their plants.**

The US has also imposed import barriers against Chinese goods and restricted the transfer of strategic technologies to China.

In response, China has imposed export bans on gallium and germanium, essential materials in the electronic, electric vehicle, and telecom sectors.

Further, governments in the West are allocating significant sums of money to avoid reliance on Chinese imports.

For instance, subsidies per electric vehicle in the US and Europe amount to around \$7,500. Companies like General Electric, which had de-emphasised manufacturing, are getting back into the sector.

What can be the implications of the measures adopted by countries against China?

These policies raise concern over the possibility of trade wars. Tariff hikes could also result in increased product prices and contribute to inflation.

Although the talks have now shifted from decoupling from China towards de-risking and diversification, the risks remain over retaliatory actions and beggar-thy-neighbor subsidies from China.

This may lead to an increase in the government debt of the Western countries.

Must Read: [De-risking, not decoupling: What's this G7 strategy against China?](#)

What can be the way ahead for India?

While de-risking and diversification are being taken up by other countries, India can focus on creating jobs in the manufacturing sector.

However, India has chosen to follow other countries, focusing only on import substitution rather than creating jobs.

[20. Accelerating India's energy transition](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Accelerating India's energy transition**" published in **Business standard** on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure (Energy)

News: In this article, the author discusses India's heavy reliance on imported energy, its need for energy security, and how diversifying energy sources like increasing natural gas usage can help. A proposed five-pronged strategy for India's gas policy is also highlighted.

About India current and future energy scenario

- India heavily relies on imported energy, particularly oil and gas.
- Over 50% of India's energy needs are imported, posing economic and supply risks.
- Renewable energy deployment has increased significantly in India.
- Despite progress, India's gas consumption is just 6-7%, below the global average of 25%.

5. Diversifying energy sources, including increasing natural gas use, is crucial for India's future.

6. A proposed sub-sea gas corridor could enhance India's energy security.

What is the significance of energy security for India?

India's economic health: The energy imports in India, especially oil and gas, consistently exceed 50%, according to estimates from the International Energy Agency. This high dependence on imported energy exposes the Indian economy to uncertainties like fluctuating international prices and supply disruptions. Energy security can therefore stabilize the Indian economy by reducing its vulnerability to these risks.

Foundation for superpower status: For India to become a superpower, energy independence is a key policy goal. Energy security, thus, is integral to India's national security. It ensures self-reliance and reduces geopolitical risks associated with energy imports.

Energy security and renewable energy: Over the past two decades, India has made significant progress in deploying renewable energy. While renewable energy is a part of the energy security solution, India should not rely solely on it. Diversifying the energy mix with low-carbon intensity options, like natural gas, can further enhance energy security.

Energy security and gas policies: Currently, natural gas makes up only 6-7% of India's total energy consumption, much lower than the global average of 25%. A revised policy approach towards gas, as suggested by a five-pronged strategy, can help increase this share, further strengthening India's energy security.

India's global commitments: Improving energy security aligns with India's commitments under the Paris Accord, making it both an economic and moral imperative.

What is the proposed "Five-Pronged Strategy" for India's gas policy?

First, India needs to **switch to a production sharing contractual system**. This can help bring in the much-needed risk capital and expertise to explore and develop our basins, especially for gas.

Second, a time-bound programme should be adopted to dismantle administered pricing controls. This will provide a transparent and market-driven signal to both producers and consumers, allowing market dynamics to dictate pricing.

Third, unbundling transportation and marketing in the natural gas sector is essential. It will allow consumers to benefit from a liberalised marketing environment and enhance security of supply.

Fourth, policy reforms are needed in the electricity markets to ensure the viability of gas-based power. Creating instruments like time-of-day pricing and non-linear pricing can allow markets to absorb more flexible gas-based power.

Fifth, the implementation of gas-based micro-grids should be promoted. These are efficient and environmentally responsible, while also decentralising policymaking.

Finally, the creation of a sub-sea gas corridor linking the Gulf region and India could enhance energy security and contribute to regional stability.

[21. A water crisis In slow motion](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**A water crisis In slow motion**" published in "Business standard" on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster management

News: In this article, the author discusses the growing problem of urban water management in India, highlighting issues like rapid urbanization, deteriorating infrastructure, and loss of natural water bodies, which contribute to increased flood disasters.

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Why is urban water management a growing concern in India?

Rapid urbanization adds pressure: Over **150 million people** have migrated to Indian cities in the past 30 years. This escalates the demand for water in urban areas.

Infrastructure problems: Poor water treatment and sewage disposal capacities struggle to meet this high demand. **Delhi and Bengaluru lose 40% and 29% of their water supply, respectively, due to leaks and theft.**

Loss of Natural water bodies: Which essential for water supply and drainage, are being drained for construction, exacerbating flood risk.

Climate change: It exacerbates the problem, bringing extreme weather events that challenge already weak municipal infrastructure and urban planning.

Short-term financial priorities: Immediate financial benefits from projects like building construction are often prioritized over sustainable planning. This short-term focus, as seen in the construction of a mall on a drained lake, intensifies long-term flood risks.

Political priorities: Political decisions often favor actions that provide immediate popularity, potentially overlooking sustainable flood management strategies. This can contribute to the intensifying cycle of flood disasters.

What should be done?

Infrastructure improvement: Upgrade the water supply and sewage systems to reduce losses. For example, Delhi could aim to significantly reduce its 40% water loss due to leaks and pilferage.

Enhance water treatment: Improve water treatment and sewage disposal capacity to meet increased urban demand.

Preserve natural water bodies: Prevent draining of lakes, rivers, and canals for construction purposes. For instance, halt practices like the construction of malls on former lake sites in Bengaluru.

Water body restoration: Undertake desilting of canals and rivers, similar to the river cleanups in Europe and the US that took over 20 years but ultimately improved water flow and quality.

Control pollution: Implement strict regulations to stop untreated sewage and industrial effluent from entering water bodies.

Mandatory water harvesting: Make water harvesting systems that can recharge falling water tables mandatory across the country.

Long-term planning: Prioritize sustainable long-term planning over short-term financial gains. Politicians should focus on initiatives with lasting environmental benefits, even if results are not immediate.

Climate change adaptation: Implement strategies to adapt to climate change, such as building resilience against extreme weather events to prevent urban flooding.

22. Discoms still an area of darkness

Source: The post is based on the article “ **Discoms still an area of darkness** ” published in “ Business standard ” on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure (Energy)

News: The revenues of electricity distribution companies (Discoms) in India have declined over a 12-year period, from 75% of total revenues in FY10 to 71% in FY22. This is despite government interventions to improve financial and operational efficiencies.

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What are reasons for decline in the revenues of Indian Discoms?

Reduced consumer payment: According to a study by Prabhat Barnwal and Nicholas Ryan, the revenues collected from bill-paying consumers have declined from 75% of total revenues in FY10 to 71% in FY22.

Free or subsidized power: To cater to lower-income groups, several states are providing free or subsidized power. This has led to lesser revenue collection from consumers.

Less incentive for loss reduction: Power Finance Corporation data notes that there is little incentive for discoms to reduce losses as their primary focus is ensuring power supply across their grid.

What are the impacts of decline in the revenues of Indian Discoms?

Increased government subsidies: As consumer revenues decline, discoms have become heavily reliant on government subsidies and grants. This led to a lack of financial discipline. For example, profits reported by two of Rajasthan's discoms in FY22 were largely due to state subsidies and grants from the Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY).

Pressure on industrial sector: The shortfall in consumer payments is often compensated by increasing the price of electricity for the industrial sector. This increases operational costs for industries.

Potential for service instability: With lower revenues, discoms face challenges in managing their operating expenses, servicing debts, and investing in infrastructure. This can potentially affect the quality and reliability of power supply.

Economic sustainability: The continuous decline in revenues and dependence on government support questions the fiscal sustainability of the power sector in the long run.

What are possible solutions for improving the finances of Discoms?

Open Access: Introduce competition among discoms. Allow consumers to choose their power provider, similar to the telecom sector.

Smart Metering: Implement smart meters across the country. As of June 2023, only 3% of consumers have a smart meter, but installation is increasing in states like Bihar, Assam, and Haryana.

Time-of-Day Metering: Encourage consumers to use power during non-peak hours by offering lower bills, thus balancing demand and reducing costs.

Reform measures: Implement various reform measures including fuel & power purchase adjustment surcharge (FPPAS) rules and ensure timely recovery of Government dues to improve the financial health of discoms.

[23. Roiling resurgence – on inflation level](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "Roiling resurgence" published in "The Hindu" on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian economy

News: In this article, the author is discussing the recent rise in inflation in India, particularly in food prices, driven by factors such as erratic monsoon rains and lower crop sowing. They emphasize the need for policymakers to control prices to support economic recovery.

About the current inflation scenario

1. The recent Consumer Price Index (CPI) data shows a rise in inflation with June's CPI reaching a three-month high of 4.81%.

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2. Food prices are leading this surge, especially in the food and beverages sector, which makes up almost 46% of the CPI's weight.

3. Specifically, cereals witnessed a 12.7% price gain, eggs rose by 7%, dairy by 8.56%, pulses by 10.5%, and spices by a sharp 19%.

4. Vegetable prices, though still in the disinflation zone, rose significantly in June, with tomatoes increasing by 64% from May.

5. Despite inflation being at 7.01% in June 2022, current trends indicate a resurgence in price pressures.

6. Erratic monsoon rains and lower sowing of the kharif crop could potentially lead to further inflationary pressures.

7. Policymakers must therefore tighten control over prices to support economic recovery.

What are the reasons for the rising inflation?

1. Rising food prices are a major cause of inflation, with the food and beverages group's inflation reaching 4.63%.

2. Specific food items like cereals and spices saw significant price increases, at 12.7% and 19% respectively.

3. Even vegetable prices, despite being in the disinflation zone, witnessed a sharp rise in June.

4. Core inflation (excluding food and fuel) remains steady but high at 5.16%.

5. Agricultural trends such as erratic monsoons and lower kharif sowing have resulted in potential crop output uncertainties, which may further fuel inflation.

What is the impact of agricultural trends on inflation?

Impact of monsoon trends on inflation: Erratic monsoon trends are causing uncertainties in the agricultural sector. These uncertainties may disrupt crop outputs, leading to price increases and thus influencing inflation rates.

Impact of sowing trends on inflation: As of July 7, overall kharif sowing was 8.7% lower than the previous year. This shortfall, especially a 24% drop in rice sowing and a 26% drop in pulses, could reduce crop availability, pushing prices and consequently inflation upwards.

Impact of oilseeds deficiency on inflation: With oilseeds reflecting a 14% deficiency compared to 2022 levels, there's a potential risk for inflation increase due to higher cooking oil prices.

[24. How to prevent disruptions by flood and extreme weather events](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**How to prevent disruptions by flood and extreme weather events**" published in "**The Indian Express**" on **15th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster management

News- North-western India and Delhi are facing floods.

Why is there a need for focussed attention on extreme weather events?

Global warming is increasing. If cities are warmed beyond 2 degrees, **climatic-impact drivers** like extreme rain and heat will increase in intensity. **Frequency and intensity of extreme weather** will also increase.

The IPCC has shown that this could **grow exponentially**. It can be much faster than the **capacity of our current governance, planning and infrastructure systems**.

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Massive future disruptions across urban India like **flooding, water scarcity and heat waves** will increase.

Why are climate impacts and risks like flooding felt intensely in our cities?

One-third of our people and two-third of our economic output is concentrated in densely built-up areas. There is **poor water, sanitation, drainage and wastewater infrastructure**.

Irrational land use and planning systems exacerbate these challenges and amplify the **vulnerability of people** who are forced to live in informal settlements and slums.

Cities in **sensitive regions** along the coast, rivers and hills face even worse impacts, due to **higher exposure and locational vulnerability**.

What is the way forward for flood management in cities?

Ensuring drainage exists and works: A **monsoon audit** is done by civic bodies ahead of the season. It ensures that storm water drains, tanks and lakes exist and work properly, and are not choked by **construction debris, silt, garbage or blocked by encroachments**.

Planning throughout the year and **adequate financial and human resources** is needed for it, which is not prioritised by civic bodies.

The medium-term solution is the **integration of drainage, water supply and wastewater systems** to store the intense rain that may come over a short period.

Drainage systems should have enough capacity to deal with the greater intensity of rain caused by changing climate.

Improving roads: The **rapid expansion of urban areas** has outpaced the development of **drainage systems**. It has led to many roads functioning as **stormwater drains**.

It is necessary to enhance the **construction and repair practices** of city roads to mitigate local flooding.

Currently, when a tar road is repaired, new layers of tar are added. Over time, this leads to an **elevated road level** compared to the surrounding areas, buildings, and drains. Consequently, these areas and drainage systems become **overwhelmed** during heavy rainfall.

The situation worsens due to **construction of flyovers, underpasses, and sometimes metro lines**. It disrupts the existing **drainage infrastructure**, resulting in significant **traffic congestion following floods**.

This issue requires **effective coordination and infrastructure planning** among all relevant agencies.

Greening cities and using blue-green-grey infrastructure: As urban areas expand into **concrete landscapes**, the capacity for **water percolation and flow** decreases.

Preserving and safeguarding urban forests, wetlands, rivers, and lakes are crucial in addressing **climate change-induced flooding, water scarcity**.

China, aims to transform 30 of its megacities into **“sponge cities”**. It is focussing on **green roofs** to slow down runoff, urban forests to **facilitate percolation and groundwater recharge**, and wetlands to **absorb and reuse** a significant portion of their water resources.

The **East Kolkata wetlands** have served as an **effective flood defence mechanism** for over a century. It treats a substantial portion of the **city’s sewage**.

Practical nature-based blue-green-grey infrastructure initiatives like that are important for climate adaptation for many cities in India.

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Reducing flood vulnerability: India possesses the **technological capabilities** to conduct **comprehensive mapping** of all its cities and towns, utilising **high-resolution satellite imagery and local topographical data** to identify areas most **susceptible to flooding**.

However, the challenge lies in **addressing the vulnerability** of people residing along river banks, low-lying areas, and unstable slopes.

Significant progress has been made in terms of **evacuation and protecting lives**. But, a lot needs to be done for establishing **genuine community-based resilience**.

One area where notable improvements have been observed is in **enhancing forecasting, early warning systems, and evacuation protocols** in major cities.

The next step is to extend these measures to all **at-risk locations**. There is a need for **strengthening critical services** such as cell phones, power supply, and water infrastructure to ensure their **resilience from extreme events**.

It is essential to provide all urban residents with access to **basic environmental services** for safeguarding cities from floods. This includes ensuring **reliable water supply, sanitation facilities, effective drainage systems, and proper management of solid waste**.

[25. Back to the new-old: West wind, East wind, or the warnings of a storm?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Back to the new-old: West wind, East wind, or the warnings of a storm?**” published in **Business Standard** on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Growth & Development, Industrial Policy

Relevance: concerns associated with protectionist measures adopted by countries against China.

News: India implemented economic reforms in 1991. It was influenced by the **Reagan-Thatcher era**, which focused on reduced governmental role in the economy.

What were the results of implementing 1991 reforms?

The reforms of 1991 were driven by the principles of liberalization, privatization, and globalization (**LPG**).

The aim was to increase market orientation and stimulate economic growth, lower inflation, improve the trade balance, and ensure external economic viability. **The reform was successful in achieving these objectives**.

However, **the reform has not been able to boost manufacturing**.

What are the consequences of the failure of reforms in boosting the manufacturing sector?

It has resulted in a lack of quality jobs, increased inequality and **made India vulnerable to China** by depending on it for strategic material imports.

In order to reduce its vulnerability, **India has adopted a more restrictive approach to trade** by implementing tariff hikes, non-tariff barriers, and restrictions on Chinese products.

This has given re-birth of government-directed industrial investment through policy tools like Investment subsidies, production incentives, tariff protection, etc.

How is the situation of manufacturing in the US and in the Western countries?

The US and countries in the West have also faced similar outcomes due to their incapability in reviving the manufacturing sector.

Hence, to decrease their vulnerability to China, **companies in the West have started investing in the US and establishing their plants**.

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The US has also imposed import barriers against Chinese goods and restricted the transfer of strategic technologies to China.

In response, China has imposed export bans on gallium and germanium, essential materials in the electronic, electric vehicle, and telecom sectors.

Further, governments in the West are allocating significant sums of money to avoid reliance on Chinese imports.

For instance, subsidies per electric vehicle in the US and Europe amount to around \$7,500. Companies like General Electric, which had de-emphasised manufacturing, are getting back into the sector.

What can be the implications of the measures adopted by countries against China?

These policies raise concern over the possibility of trade wars. Tariff hikes could also result in increased product prices and contribute to inflation.

Although the talks have now shifted from decoupling from China towards de-risking and diversification, the risks still remain over retaliatory actions and beggar-thy-neighbour subsidies from China.

This may lead to an increase in the government debt of the Western countries.

Must Read: [De-risking, not decoupling: What's this G7 strategy against China?](#)

What can be the way ahead for India?

While de-risking and diversification are being taken up by other countries, India can focus on creating jobs in the manufacturing sector.

However, India has chosen to follow other countries, focusing only on import substitution rather than creating jobs.

General Studies Paper -4

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General Studies - 4

1. [Corporate social responsibility projects demand expertise too](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Corporate social responsibility projects demand expertise too**” published in the “**mint**” on **10th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 4 – corporate governance

Relevance: Issues related to corporate Social Responsibility

News–The article is about concerns related to the money spent by companies on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

Companies above a threshold level of profit, sales or net worth are mandated to invest 2% of their average profit for the last 3 years on CSR activities, which are defined.

What are the issues related to CSR spending?

Limited areas: There has been concentration in **three activities**. These are education, health and rural development. For example, **77% of the total amount spent** between 2014-15 and 2020-21 was on these three areas.

Regional Inequity in spending: There has also been a **concentration of spending in some large states:** Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Companies do not have any **core competence in these areas**. Internal staff that are not competent to do this work. They are involved in **low-effort exercises** like distributing water coolers or laptops to schools.

Companies **look for easy ways out** by transferring the money to a centralized fund like the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund to save the management time on CSR compliance.

What are the challenges faced by companies?

Most of the companies like to transfer the money to a centralized fund like the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund. It is because companies are not meant to do social work. They need to allocate more resources in compliance with their CSR responsibility. Therefore, it should be the responsibility of the government to use CSR funds effectively.

What is the way forward?

Government can **set up a separate organization** to work on the deployment of these resources. **NITI Aayog could be entrusted with this responsibility.**

Centre can take the prerogative on **how to deploy these funds**. The amount can be paid by companies in a **lump-sum manner** to deploy based on their social-sector priorities.

Government can **draw up a list of all CSR projects followed by directed or suggested CSR spending**. Advice can be given routinely to firms on where money should be spent and for what exact activity.