



9 PM

Compilation

17th to 22nd July, 2023

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General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. [Express View on UNAIDS report: AIDS and inequality](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on UNAIDS report: AIDS and inequality**” published in **The Indian Express** on 17th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

News: In this article, the author discusses the challenges in eradicating AIDS by 2030.

About current AIDS data

- HIV affects 70% of people globally, but treatment suppresses the virus in most cases.
- “Hyper-masculinity” inhibits many men from seeking HIV testing or treatment.
- Women and children often do not receive optimal HIV treatment, with only 67% and 46% achieving viral suppression, respectively.
- United Nations Member States committed to implementing a bold agenda to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

What are the major constraints in achieving the target of eliminating AIDS by 2030?

Poverty and marginalization: Poor and marginalized communities often lack access to the necessary healthcare and are subjected to stigma. As a result, HIV patients from these communities continue to suffer and are left behind in the fight against AIDS.

Gender inequality: Gender inequality is another major constraint. Men often avoid getting tested due to societal pressure, also known as “hyper-masculinity”, hindering early diagnosis and treatment. Meanwhile, women, particularly in low-income regions, do not receive optimal HIV treatment. According to UNAIDS, viral suppression is seen in 76% of male patients but only 67% of female patients.

Insufficient funding: Despite increasing overall health budgets, lower and middle-income countries heavily depend on external funds for AIDS related expenses. These funds are insufficient to effectively combat AIDS, especially in parts of West Asia and Africa.

Lack of prevention programs: There’s a significant gap in HIV prevention programs, especially for children and young women. The viral suppression rate amongst children is just 46%. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 40% of districts with high HIV incidence are covered by dedicated prevention programs.

Drug shortages: Countries like India have witnessed patient protests due to shortages in essential drugs. This indicates the urgent need for improved supply chains and local manufacturing capabilities to ensure the continuous availability of AIDS medication.

What should be done?

- Efforts should focus on addressing poverty and gender inequality to improve access to AIDS healthcare.
- Men should be encouraged to get HIV testing, and women’s treatment needs to be optimized.
- Funding for AIDS in lower and middle-income countries needs to be increased. Prevention programs, particularly for children and young women, should be expanded.
- Finally, governments must address drug shortages, possibly by boosting local production of AIDS medications.

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2. [First, Make All Polygamy Illegal – on Uniform Civil Code \(UCC\)](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**First, Make All Polygamy Illegal**” published in Times of India on 17th July 2023.

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

News: In this article, author argues that instead of focusing on a full Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India, attention should be given to banning polygamy first. They believe dealing with other issues can come after polygamy is made illegal across all communities.

Why Polygamy should be a real target in the UCC debate?

Prevalence in communities: Even though the overall percentage is low, polygamy still exists in various Indian communities. For instance, about 1.9% of Muslims and 1.3% of Hindus practice polygamy.

Legal exceptions: Certain communities, like Scheduled Tribes and Muslims, are allowed to practice polygamy due to exemptions in the law. This discrepancy makes polygamy an important focus in the UCC debate.

Impact on gender justice: Addressing polygamy first can lead to improved gender justice. By banning polygamy, matters of inheritance and women’s rights can be better addressed, as demonstrated by the Hindu Succession Act following the Hindu Marriage Act.

Staged reforms: Tackling polygamy before other UCC issues allows for a systematic and sequential approach to social reform. This strategy proved effective with the Hindu Marriage Act and the Hindu Succession Act.

Minority rights protection: Focusing on banning polygamy prevents its misuse as a shield for other UCC issues. This way, the rights of the affected minorities, albeit small in number, can be better protected.

What are the challenges in implementing a full-fledged UCC?

Potential disruption to traditional practices: Implementing a complete UCC might disturb long-standing cultural practices. Some communities, like certain Scheduled Tribes, follow traditions like matrilineal descent or ultimogeniture, where the youngest sibling inherits property.

Taxation complications: The introduction of a UCC could impact the Hindu Undivided Family as a tax category. This might not be favorable for millions of Hindus who currently enjoy certain tax benefits under this category.

Multiplicity of socio-cultural norms: India is a diverse country with varied socio-cultural norms across communities. Harmonizing these into a UCC is a significant challenge due to resistance to change and the need to respect cultural diversity.

Reluctance in certain communities: There could be resistance from communities that are not ready for certain aspects of the UCC, such as the proposed ban on polygamy. As pointed out, only 1.9% of Muslims and 1.3% of Hindus practice polygamy, but the issue has been contentious in the UCC debate.

Balancing reform and respect for diversity: A full UCC must strike a delicate balance between implementing necessary social reforms and respecting the cultural diversity of India’s numerous communities. This makes the process of establishing a full-fledged UCC quite challenging.

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3. An enlarged Nato does not enhance its appeal

Source: The post is based on the article “**An enlarged Nato does not enhance its appeal**” published in **Live mint** on 17th July 2023.

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

News: In this article author discusses the geopolitical implications of Ukraine’s potential NATO membership, the tension between NATO and Russia, and the suggested role of India amidst these global political changes.

How will Ukraine’s NATO membership impact other nations?

Effects on Russia: Ukraine’s NATO membership would limit Russia’s power. As Ukraine is Russia’s neighbor, NATO’s presence could be seen as a direct threat by Moscow. This could further strain the already tense relations between Russia and NATO.

Impact on NATO Countries: NATO countries will be obliged to defend Ukraine under the alliance’s mutual defense pact. This might increase tensions as these nations could potentially face a direct confrontation with Russia.

Implications for Finland and Sweden: Finland and Sweden, recently joined NATO due to the Ukrainian conflict. Ukraine’s membership could reinforce their decision, as it would strengthen the NATO’s northern flank against Russia.

Effects on the Baltic states: The Baltic states, already NATO members, would likely feel more secure with Ukraine’s inclusion. This would establish a stronger front against potential Russian aggression.

What are the major concerns related to Ukraine’s NATO membership?

Risk of armed and nuclear conflict: Ukraine’s NATO membership could risk triggering an armed conflict with Russia. Due to NATO’s commitment to defend any member under attack, a dispute involving Ukraine could draw the entire alliance into a major confrontation. Given that Russia is a nuclear power, this situation further raises the stakes by increasing the risk of a nuclear conflict. The potential for such a high-level conflict is a significant concern associated with Ukraine’s possible NATO membership.

Uncertain support for Ukraine: NATO’s refusal to offer a schedule for Ukraine’s membership signals the alliance’s hesitation. This could be due to fear of antagonizing Russia or reluctance to become directly involved in the Ukraine-Russia conflict.

Impact on Non-NATO Countries: Ukraine’s NATO membership could also affect non-NATO countries like Moldova and Georgia. It could increase their aspirations to join NATO, which could exacerbate tensions with Russia.

What should be done by India in this scenario?

India should maintain its policy of strategic autonomy, making decisions that best serve its own national interests.

It should be cautious about aligning too closely with any major power bloc such as NATO. Despite the possibility of joining a ‘NATO+’, India must remember its longstanding principle of non-alignment. This stance has served India well in the past, allowing it to maintain good relations with different countries.

India should also continue its diplomatic engagements with all parties involved, ensuring that it doesn’t compromise its sovereignty or get drawn into conflicts not of its making.

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4. [We can expect more turbulence ahead in Indian diaspora politics](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**We can expect more turbulence ahead in Indian diaspora politics**” published in **Live mint** on 17th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Indian Diaspora

News: This article discusses the increasing complexity of diaspora politics. It suggests that Indian leaders should carefully engage with the diaspora to avoid exacerbating these issues while prioritizing the interests of Indian citizens abroad.

What is the impact of immigrants?

Impact on local societies: Immigrants often maintain deep connections with their home countries' politics. For example, Indians living in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia have engaged in protests related to their homeland's issues. However, this can lead to tension with local societies. **Examples** include communal violence in Leicester and inter-group clashes in Australia.

Effects on diaspora communities: These new immigrants may also upset social dynamics within the diaspora. An example is the tension between recent immigrants and older immigrants or second and third-generation members of the diaspora. The older generations worry about social equations with local societies being disturbed.

Political impact: The influence of immigrants can lead to radical political events. For instance, a 19-year-old Indian American attempted to attack the White House, expressing extreme political beliefs. This showcases the possible political risks related to immigrant populations.

Response from host nations: Host nations have started to respond to diaspora issues. **For instance**, Seattle City Council in the US outlawed caste discrimination after advocacy from diaspora civil society groups. This shows that immigrants can influence policy in their host countries.

What are the challenges created due to immigrants?

Increasing violence and unrest: Recent immigrants, staying engaged with their home countries' politics, can cause incidents of violence and unrest in their host nations. For example, Pro-Khalistan protests in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia led to vandalism, arson, and rioting.

Inter-group conflicts: Inter-group conflicts between different generations or factions within the diaspora can occur. For instance, Hindu and Sikh communities in Australia got into fights due to political disagreements.

Potential for radicalization: There is a risk of political radicalization among immigrants. This was evident when a 19-year-old Indian American attempted an attack on the White House, showcasing the extreme ideologies he held.

Erosion of local societies: There is a concern that the actions of new immigrants may upset the social balance that older immigrants have established with local societies. This was a concern expressed by community leaders in Australia, Singapore, and the US.

Influence on host nations' policies: Immigrants can have significant influence on the policies of their host nations. This was seen when Seattle City Council outlawed caste discrimination, responding to the advocacy of diaspora civil society groups, which could potentially cause tension in local societies.

What should be done?

Avoid conflation: Indian leaders should not conflate Indian origin with loyalty to India or sectarianism. They must respect individual identities of Indian-origin individuals in their adopted countries.

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Careful engagement: Leaders engaging with the diaspora should move cautiously to avoid exacerbating community tensions.

Focus on citizens: The Indian government should prioritize the interests of its citizens abroad over any person with Indian heritage.

Awareness of risks: Leaders and civil society groups must stay alert to the potential risks involved with diaspora politics.

5. [What connects India and Bangladesh](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **“What connects India and Bangladesh”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **17th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and Bangladesh bilateral relationship

News- The article discusses the areas of potential cooperation between India and Bangladesh.

What are the areas of potential cooperation between India and Bangladesh?

Political ties- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh in 2021 as a special guest to commemorate the centenary of Bangladesh’s founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

During the same year, Ram Nath Kovind, who was the President of India at the time, also visited Bangladesh to celebrate the golden jubilee of Bangladesh’s victory in its War of Independence. In September of the previous year, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh paid a visit to India.

Trade and investment- In the last financial year, there was a significant increase of **100% in Bangladesh exports** to India. It was valued at \$2 billion. India’s exports to Bangladesh have increased by **70 per cent** and are currently **at \$16 billion**.

Both countries are negotiating the **Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** to increase trade between the two countries.

Connectivity- Bangladesh currently **imports 1,160 MW of electricity** from India. There are ongoing discussions regarding the possibility of **importing electricity from Nepal and Bhutan through India**.

The distance of 350 miles between Kolkata and Agartala can be covered in approximately six to seven hours by passing through Bangladesh. In the coming months, the **Akhaura-Agartala rail line** will be inaugurated, and **Shahjadpur-Kulaura line** will be completed.

Experts believe that establishing **connectivity between Petropol and Benapol, Gede and Darshana, as well as Birol and Radhikapur**, will serve the interests of both countries.

Water resource management- Significant progress has been made in the field of **water resources management**. It generated hope for the **long-anticipated Teesta water-sharing agreement**.

The two nations have successfully signed a **MoU pertaining to the equitable distribution of the Feni River’s waters**.

They have also reached an agreement to **share technical information and establish a framework for an interim water-sharing arrangement** involving six rivers: Manu, Mahuri, Khowai, Gomti, Dharla, and Dudhkumar.

A MoU between India’s Ministry of Jal Shakti and Bangladesh’s Ministry of Water Resources for allowing the withdrawal of up to 153 cusecs of water by both countries from **River Kushiya** **during dry seasons** was signed.

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Governments from various political parties are interested in finalising the **Teesta Agreement**.

Security– The government of Bangladesh has taken significant measures to ensure that no actions within its borders pose a threat to **India’s territorial integrity or destabilise the northeastern states**.

One of the prominent leaders of the **United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)**, Anup Chetia, was extradited to India.

6. [Eye on Emirati flows – There are both risks and benefits in the rupee-dirham settlement system](#)

Source: The post is based on the articles

“Eye on Emirati flows – There are both risks and benefits in the rupee-dirham settlement system” published in **The Hindu** on **18th July 2023** and

“Gently Pushing Rupee – Steady steps promoting rupee-based foreign trade are pragmatic. Internationalization follows economic heft” published in **The Times of India** on **18th July 2023**

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

Relevance: About the MoU between India and the UAE

News: Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Central Bank of the UAE agreed to establish a framework for enabling the use of their local currencies for cross-border transactions.

What is the agreement about?

As per the MoU, all current account payments, including those involving the two countries’ exporters and importers, and certain “permitted” capital account transactions could be settled using either the rupee or the dirham.

The two central banks plan to create a Local Currency Settlement System and potentially link their payments messaging systems in the future.

This would lead to the development of a rupee-dirham foreign exchange market that would help in pricing the two currencies independent of their exchange rates with other currencies, such as the dollar and the euro.

This would also eliminate exchange rate risks for Indian and Emirati businesses when quoting prices for goods and services. It will enhance the ease of doing business and boost trade between the two countries.

The establishment of the India-UAE local currency settlement system has the potential to serve as a model for other bilateral currency agreements.

What is the purpose behind such an agreement?

To promote bilateral use of their local currencies and reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar as an intermediary for settling transactions and enhancing economic ties between the two nations.

It is also a step towards [internationalizing the Indian rupee](#). This move aligns with India’s growing economy and its increasing share in global trade.

World Bank estimated that India was the first country set to receive an annual remittance flow of more than \$100 billion. Linkage of India’s digital payments systems to other central banks will provide a further boost to remittance flows.

The RBI has indicated that increased investment by UAE-based firms is one possibility for utilizing rupee payments.

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What are other measures taken by the RBI to promote rupee based international transactions?

[Click Here to Read](#)

What are the challenges associated with the agreement between India and the UAE?

The success of the agreement will depend on the level of adoption by businesses in both countries. After the bilateral [Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement](#), the UAE's trade surplus with India has increased.

As a result, Emirati businesses must identify profitable ways to use potential rupee flows if they choose to accept payments in the Indian currency.

What can be the way ahead?

Despite such possibilities, in a rapidly evolving global environment, businesses will base their decisions on economic logic. Policymakers must also remain aware of the risks arising from such moves even as they eye the opportunities.

Moreover, RBI's gradual approach is pragmatic as it allows retail transactions at a lower transaction cost and encourages rupee settlement for cross-border trades.

However, **enhanced internationalization requires GOI to revisit its** restrictive foreign trade and capital account policies.

[7. Childline has worked for suffering children – government doesn't need to take over](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Childline has worked for suffering children – government doesn't need to take over”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **18th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance: Issues related to children

News- The Centre has decided to take over the child helpline service operated by NGOs since its inception in 1998.

How has the government 's approach towards protection of vulnerable people changed over time?

The prevailing viewpoint was that the **care and protection of the vulnerable** was not primarily a **law-and-order issue**.

However, there was more emphasis on **law enforcement**. It ignored the fact that crime is the result of **dysfunctional society**, and **interaction between the individual and his environment**.

The report of the **All-India Committee (1980-83) on Jail Reforms** had nudged the government to evolve a correctional strategy. It led to the creation of a **Ministry of Welfare**, which was later renamed **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.

The committee recommended a **holistic approach** to protecting against crime and **rehabilitating offenders through institutional and non-institutional services**. Such an approach involved the participation of both the **state and the civil society**.

The **Juvenile Justice Act 1986** superseded the various **state Children's Acts of 1956**.

The **“chota jails” for destitute children** converted into **state-run children's homes** under the new Act. Subsequent amendments allowed NGOs to set up **homes for children** under the close watch of the state.

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Why Centre's decision to take over the child helpline service operated by NGOs is not a step in the right direction?

The **Childline Foundation** was constituted with members drawn from civil society, academia and the corporate world. It was assigned the **toll-free national child helpline number 1098** by Department of Telecommunications

The NGOs working with street children have the **responsibility to operate the helpline**. Surveys indicated that children were reluctant to contact a helpline manned by government employees, especially the police.

Their peers were better positioned to receive these phone calls, comprehend the **seriousness of the issue**, and determine the exact location of the distressed child.

Over a span of 25 years, Childline emerged as the **crucial support system** for vulnerable children. It helps orphans, destitute individuals, runaway youths, and lost children.

When the police encounter an unattended child, they turn to Childline as their **initial point of contact**. Additionally, the district administration relies on **Childline's assistance** in rescuing child labourers and aiding drug addicts.

Concerned citizens can dial 1098 to report children in need of help.

8. [A Bill that fences in the right to information](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A Bill that fences in the right to information**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **18th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance– Issues related to Right to Information Act

News- Union Cabinet has approved the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill. It makes some changes to the Right to Information.

What are some facts about the RTI Act?

The Indian Right to Information Act has been in existence since 2005. It **empowers citizens** and recognises them as **true rulers**.

It was the result of efforts by the **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan**.

Its preamble states that democracy requires **informed citizens and transparency in governance** to hold government **accountable and curb corruption**.

It leads to an **efficient government** while preserving the **ideals of democracy**.

Those in power structure are threatened by this **transfer of power** to the ordinary citizen. Citizens have used this **democratic instrument** to expose wrongdoing and corruption.

What is the basis of refusal of information by public authorities in the RTI Act?

Ten categories of information have been exempted from disclosure to protect **some legitimate interests** and working of the government. These are outlined in **Section 8(1)**.

The most widely misused exemption is **Section 8(1)(j)**. It exempts personal information which is not associated with **public activity**, or which harms the **privacy of an individual**.

It has a provision which states the information, which cannot be denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature, shall not be denied to any person.

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How Section 8(1)(j) has been misused by public authorities?

Many officials refuse information by claiming that it was **personal information**, and they would not give it. It has been used to cover **arbitrary, corrupt or illegal acts** of government officials.

Some examples are denial of details of the beneficiaries of the Prime Minister's fund; bogus caste certificates, education certificates: verification of affidavits of elected representatives; unfair assessment of students and job seekers in government; file notings and minutes of meetings.

How will the proposed Data Protection Bill have an impact on the RTI Act?

The proposed Data Protection Bill plans to amend **RTI Act Section 8(1)(j)**. It will exempt **information under 8(1)(j)**, which is related to **personal information**.

If this amendment is made, all information which can be related to a person could be **legally denied**.

Most information could be shown as being **related to a person**. Whenever a PIO wants to deny information, he will be able to **link it to some person**.

The proposed Bill defines the **term 'person' very widely**. It includes individuals, companies, and the state. Most information except budgets would be linked to one of these.

Thus, the RTI would become a **Right to Deny Information**. It will be an **ineffective tool**.

9. [India, France and what keeps their ties ticking](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**India, France and what keeps their ties ticking**" published in **The Hindu** on **19th July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **India and France relations**

News: The article explains the India and France bilateral relations.

How has India and France's relationship evolved over the years?

India and France have built a tradition of joining each other's national day parades.

French Presidents have been invited to be the chief guests at the Republic Day Parade in Delhi while the Indian PMs have been invited to France's Bastille Day parade.

French President Jacques Chirac was the first French chief guest to be invited at the Republic Day Parade in Delhi. India's first ever Strategic Partnership agreement between India and France was signed between PM I.K. Gujral and the President Chirac.

Further, both countries have held on to **three pillars in the relationship: 1) non-interference** in each other's internal affairs, **2) belief in strategic autonomy and non-alignment**, and **3) a refusal to pull the other into its own coalitions and alliances**.

India was also one of a few invitees to the preparatory committee of "**Paris Conference on International Economic Cooperation**", hosted by France.

Moreover, although French officials joined the P-5 nations in criticizing the Pokhran-II nuclear test in 1998, **France did not join the US-led effort to impose sanctions on India**.

However, when India won its waiver at the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2008, it was France that India signed its first civil nuclear deal with.

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How has been the relationship between the Indian and France in recent years?

The relationship between the two nations has been build up so strong that **despite the violent protest over the mistreatment of immigrant communities, PM Modi did not hesitate even once in planning his visit.**

Even France did not bring up the European Parliament's criticism of India over the violence in Manipur.

Further, in March 2022, France collaborated with Mexico to co-author a UN Security Council resolution aiming to ensure unrestricted humanitarian aid in the conflict zone of Ukraine.

When the resolution reached the UN General Assembly, India abstained from voting. However, **France did not express any disappointment regarding India's abstention.**

Similarly, **India also did not have differences with France over Macron's visit to China in April this year.** France has also shown interest in traveling to South Africa for the BRICS summit in August.

Must Read: [India-France relations: significance and challenges](#)

What has been the stand of France and India over different strategic coalition groups?

France has publicly expressed its disapproval of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-plus partnership plans. India has also rejected the plans.

India-France Roadmap on the Indo-Pacific released last week further clarifies that neither side is attempting to pull the other into its other regional military coalitions.

France has also shown little enthusiasm for the "Quad-Plus" coalitions proposed in 2020, which lost momentum following the U.S.-France disagreement over the [AUKUS agreement](#).

What lies ahead?

The relationship between the two countries has grown significantly. France is the only country with which the Indian Navy has conducted joint patrols so far.

There are also plans of conduction joint military exercises to boost the relationship of both the nations.

[10. From Great Powers to Asia – India is raising its diplomatic game](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"From Great Powers to Asia – India is raising its diplomatic game"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **19th July 2023.**

Syllabus : GS 2- International Relations

Relevance : Indian renewed approach towards the major powers and regional geopolitics

News – The article explains the India approach towards its Asian neighbourhood in context of its relationship with major powers.

What is the current Indian approach on regional geopolitics in the context of its relationship with major powers?

There was emphasis on India's neighborhood during Modi's visit to Washington and Paris. In France, Modi and Macron issued a declaration on the **Indo-Pacific Roadmap for wide-ranging cooperation.**

First time, India agreed to work together with a former **European colonial power in the Indian Ocean.** India discarded the main principle of Indian foreign policy that **colonial and "extra-regional" powers** should be kept out of the Indian Ocean.

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Modi and Macron have expanded the **Indian Ocean regional framework** to include the Pacific. The **Indo-Pacific Roadmap** issued by the two leaders declared that Delhi and Paris will “continue to work together to extend development cooperation to countries in the region, including in Africa, the Indian Ocean Region, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific”.

Both leaders agreed for more cooperation with regional partners in **bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral arrangements** like the **Indian Ocean Rim Association, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, the Indian Ocean Commission**.

Ino-pacific plays a very important role in **India’s strategic partnership** with Washington today. The joint statement issued by Modi and US President Joe Biden last month talks about **strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific through the Quad**.

Modi and Biden agreed for closer cooperation with **regional platforms** such as the **Indian Ocean Rim Association, Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, and ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific Region**”.

Both leaders supported the **enhanced consultations** between the two governments on regional issues including South Asia, the Indo-Pacific and East Asia.

What was India’s approach towards its Asian neighbourhood after independence?

India’s relations with its **Asian neighbourhood** since independence were treated as separate from Delhi’s **engagement with the great powers**. There was a thought among policymakers that the major powers should be kept out of the region to create an “**area of peace**” in Asia.

Delhi lacked the authority to prevent major powers from entering the region or to discourage its Asian neighbours from **aligning with external powers**.

But, India did not change its stance. Notions such as “**Asia for Asians**” and “**Indian Ocean security without the Superpowers**” continued to dominate Indian thinking.

Delhi insisted that the primary requirement for **membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** was the absence of **foreign military bases on national territory**.

Delhi disregarded the fact that most threats to a **nation’s sovereignty** arise from issues with neighbouring countries.

India’s **unrealistic principles of regional security** were further compounded by the **economic radicalism espoused in the NAM and G-77 forums**. It pushed India further away from the realities of the Asian region.

How did India policy change after the Cold War?

There were compulsions in India to **liberalise its economy**.

Its **regional engagement** with different parts of Asia and the Indian Ocean acquired a **higher priority**.

There was renewed focus on **trade, investment and connectivity** in bilateral relations with its neighbours in Asia.

India also deviated from its earlier policy of keeping **political distance from the major powers**. It collaborated with Moscow to promote a “**multipolar world**” through the Russia-India-China (RIC) forum and later via the BRICS.

India also deviated from its earlier policy of **keeping the region and the world separate**. It acquired the membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation led by Russia and China to keep the US out of their backyard.

Delhi also joined the **Indo-Pacific framework and the Quad** due to its deteriorating relationship with China

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India joined forces with Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States to establish the **I2U2 forum in the Western context**.

It is evident that India's **strategic partnerships with Western powers** are gaining more prominence compared to its **engagement with Russia and China**.

Delhi now adopts an **integrated approach** to its interests and pursues them through **new and overlapping forums**.

As Foreign Minister Jaishankar conveyed to Southeast Asian leaders in Jakarta recently, the **Quad complements the efforts of the ASEAN and the institutions** led by it.

11. [Express View on weaknesses in statistical system: Plug the data gaps](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Express View on weaknesses in statistical system: Plug the data gaps**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **19th July 2023**.

Syllabus : GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance: Issues related to statistical exercise by government

News- The government has now expanded the scope of the 2019 committee on economic statistics to also advise on survey methodology, including the sampling frame and sample design.

What are issues with government statistical exercise?

There are issues related to **quality and accuracy** of the data that is collected. There are concerns regarding the **suppression of data, and political interference** in the statistical institutions.

The **NSS surveys on consumption expenditure** have consistently underestimated **household consumption expenditure** in comparison to the estimates derived from **national account statistics**.

The results of the **consumption expenditure survey** conducted for the year 2017-18 have not been made available due to **concerns regarding its quality**. This particular survey is essential for **estimating poverty and inequality levels** in India.

The survey is also utilized in **calculating various indicators** including the consumer price index, which holds significance for monetary policy considerations.

What is the way forward to improve the government statistics?

Questions raised over **survey mechanisms, overestimation of rural population and low response rate** will need to be addressed. As will issues of data quality.

There is a need to address the issues related to **collection and dissemination of data** even if they are politically uncomfortable. The lack of data only compounds the problem.

The need to address **weakness and gaps** in the country's statistical apparatus cannot be denied. But, casting doubt on the **accuracy and reliability** of data if it does not conform to a **specific narrative** is not the right thing. Policy cannot be formulated in a **data vacuum**.

12. [Black Sea Grain Initiative](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Granny Future**” published in “**The Times of India**” and “**Food insecurity returns**” published in the “**Business Standard**” on **19th July 2023**.

Syllabus : GS2- International relations

Relevance: Issues of global importance

News- Russia has decided to pull out of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

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What are the reasons for this Russian action?

Russia is a major wheat producer. It has ample **alternative options** for its exports. **Bumper harvest** is expected in Russia over the year, and it wants to take full advantage of any price effects.

There are **geopolitical reasons** also. Moscow says that a **parallel agreement** to help boost its **exports of food and fertilisers** hasn't been implemented.

Istanbul was carefully **balancing its relationship** with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Russia since the invasion.

However, in recent times, the Turkish President announced **concessions to the West and Ukraine**, and undermined this **balancing act**.

He has changed his earlier position on admission of Sweden into Nato and has no objection over it. Now, he even favours the **Ukraine membership of the security alliance**.

What are some facts about Black Sea Grain Initiative?

The grain deal was partially **brokered and supervised by Turkiye**. It has **control over access to the Black Sea** through the **Bosphorus, a strait**.

As per UN, the deal has lowered **global food prices** by more than 20% since March last year. Nearly 33 million metric tonnes of grains are being exported out of the Black Sea ports.

The World Food Programme has transported more than 7,25,000 tonnes of wheat to countries hit by **wars and extreme weather** with help of the deal. Beneficiaries included **Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and Kenya**.

What will be the impacts of Russia's refusal to continue the grain deal?

It will affect **food availability**. In the short term. Trade had already been effectively affected by **Russian non-cooperation** in the deal. **Odessa port** was being targeted by Russian drone attacks.

This has **minimal impact on prices** because of good wheat harvest elsewhere, including in Brazil. But in the medium to long term, **food insecurity** will increase globally.

Alternative routes for Ukrainian wheat are difficult to find. East European countries have an **obstructionist attitude** towards wheat imports and transit through the bloc.

It can lead to **tightening food markets** in developing countries. This can create **political unrest and macroeconomic instability**.

Why India needs to be worried?

In India, **domestic factors** are important in deciding the cereal prices. But, India should not be **complacent**.

The **inflation in cereals** is in double digits, with the rate touching 12.7% in June. Indian cereal stock is the lowest level since the outbreak of Covid in 2020.

If the Black Sea deal is undermined, India will have little options for **lowering domestic cereal inflation through imports**, especially in wheat. **Unpredictable monsoon** will also have impacts.

What is the way forward for India?

India should make efforts to address this issue through its **presidency of the G20 grouping**. India should not intensify the problem.

There are concerns globally that New Delhi will block rice export if there is **domestic inflationary pressure**. The **international ramifications** should also be taken into consideration.

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India can **put pressure on Russia** through India's contact with Russia for restoring the world's access to Ukrainian wheat on **humanitarian grounds**.

13. New opportunities and a few old issues as Wickremesinghe comes calling

Source: The post is based on the article "**New opportunities and a few old issues as Wickremesinghe comes calling**" published in "The Indian Express" on 19th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- IR (India and its neighborhood-relations.)

News: This article discusses Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe's upcoming visit to India, highlighting past tensions, current efforts for closer ties, and ongoing concerns regarding the Tamil issue in India-Sri Lanka relations.

What are the past tensions and ongoing concerns in India-Sri Lanka relations?

Past tensions in India-Sri Lanka relations

Commitment issues: During Wickremesinghe's previous tenure as Prime Minister, he failed to move forward with the commitments made to India. For instance, projects like the development of the Trincomalee oil tank farm remained stagnant.

Hambantota port sale: Under Wickremesinghe, the Hambantota port was sold to a state-owned Chinese company that had initially built it to settle Sri Lanka's debts.

Indian intervention in the 1980s: India trained Tamil militant groups in the 1980s, leading to the 1987 India-Sri Lanka Accord. This caused resentment in Sri Lanka when the Indian Peace Keeping Force was deployed in the northern and eastern parts of the island nation.

Ongoing Concerns in India-Sri Lanka Relations

Docking of Yuan Wang 5: Recently, a ship called Yuan Wang 5 docked in Hambantota. While Sri Lanka and China described it as a "scientific research vessel", India viewed it as a "surveillance" ship with strategic capabilities.

Financial assistance & projects: India's financial help to Sri Lanka has led to some Sri Lankans feeling that their country is paying a heavy price for India's assistance.

The Tamil question: The demand for the full implementation of the 13th Amendment, which grants provincial autonomy to the Tamil-dominated Northern Province, remains a contentious issue. The amendment, introduced under the 1987 Accord, hasn't been fully implemented, leading to continued dissatisfaction among Tamils.

How is the Tamil issue influencing the current dynamics between India and Sri Lanka?

1987 Accord obligations: As a signatory to the 1987 Accord, India is seen as a guarantor of the agreement. Tamil groups demand that India ensure Sri Lanka fully implements the 13th Amendment, granting provincial autonomy to the Tamil-majority Northern Province.

Election implications: Some believe emphasizing the 13th amendment before upcoming elections may assist the Rajapaksas by portraying it as a "separatist" amendment.

Fishery disputes: The issue of Tamil Nadu fishers poaching in Sri Lankan waters has caused friction between Tamils on both sides of the Palk Strait, affecting bilateral relations.

What will be the impact of this visit on India Sri Lanka relationship?

Strengthening economic ties: Wickremesinghe's emphasis on "economic integration" hints at possible advancements on agreements like the Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement. His advocacy for bilateral deals and special trade areas with India's southern states also hints at future collaboration.

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Addressing controversial issues: Past concerns like the Hambantota port sale to a Chinese firm and the docking of the “surveillance” ship Yuan Wang 5 in Sri Lankan waters affected trust. The visit might provide an opportunity to address and clarify these decisions.

Rebuilding political rapport: Given the limited time of Wickremesinghe’s stay and New Delhi’s earlier reservations about him, this visit is significant in rebuilding political trust and understanding.

The Tamil issue: Tamil groups pressuring India over the 13th Amendment showcases the importance of the Tamil issue in bilateral relations. Wickremesinghe’s interactions with Tamil parties before his visit underscores this.

Future commitments: Wickremesinghe has expressed a desire for a long-term relationship “transcending individual leaders or political parties.” This visit will likely lay the groundwork for future engagements and collaborations, especially in economic sectors.

14. A job and career right the disabled cannot be denied

Source- The post is based on the article “**A job and career right the disabled cannot be denied**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **20th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance: Issues related to disabled persons

News- The article explains the issue of reservation in promotion for people with disability.

What are the provisions related to reservation for disabled persons?

The right of the disabled person to be employed and promoted in government jobs on equal basis was first recognised by the **Persons With Disabilities Act**. It introduced a **3% reservation for the disabled** in employment.

There was reservation for disabled in **Groups C and D** before the **PwD Act**. Now, the Act extended reservation for the disabled in **Groups A and B**.

What has been the stand of the judiciary on reservation in promotion for disabled persons?

In 1998, the DoPT made an important interpretation, considering reservation for the disabled in promotions as an **essential component of the reservation system**.

But, reservation of the disabled in promotion in Groups A and B was withdrawn in 2005 by another order of DoPT. It shows the apathetic **attitude of the administration** towards the disabled.

SC in its judgement in 2016, granted **reservation in promotion in Groups A and B**. But the Government of India did not make any effort to implement the judgement.

A **case of contempt** was filed in the Supreme Court in 2017. Court challenged the decision in the Indra Sawhney judgement.

As per SC, physical disability as the **basis for providing reservation** to the disabled is **not denied under Article 16(1)**.

DoPT issued another order in 2022. Though the order made important clarifications on the reservation of seats for the disabled in recruitment.

Why does the judiciary need to be proactive in matters of reservation for disabled?

The judiciary has been instrumental in upholding justice for disabled individuals, particularly following the **implementation of the PwD Act in 1995**.

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However, in this instance, the judiciary's actions seem to have aggravated the **government's indifference** towards the **needs and aspirations of the disabled community**.

The refusal to grant reservations in promotions is an obstacle for **disabled individuals' advancement** within their respective organisations.

This hindrance undermines the larger objective of **inclusivity for the disabled** in society. It obstructs their ability to actively contribute to India's development.

15. More than court action, revisit the Indus Waters Treaty

Source– The post is based on the article “**More than court action, revisit the Indus Waters Treaty**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **20th July 2023**.

Syllabus : GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and Pakistan bilateral relationship

News- The article explains the issues related to the Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan.

What are the issues faced by IWT?

Over the past ten years, there has been a growing trend of using the judicial route to resolve disputes arising from the construction and design aspects of **run-of-river hydroelectric projects**.

The Indus Waters Treaty permits India to construct these projects on the **tributaries of the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab rivers** before they enter Pakistan.

In January of this year, Pakistan took the initiative to initiate **arbitration at the Permanent Court of Arbitration** based in The Hague.

The purpose of this arbitration was to address matters concerning the **certain design elements of the Kishanganga and Ratle projects**, which are located on the Chenab river.

Why is there a need for a relook at IWT?

The IWT provides only some element of **predictability and certainty** with regard to the future supplies of water to the riparian states. But, it needs to incorporate mechanisms that allow flexibility in case of changes in the quantity of water available for allocation among the parties.

Bilateral water agreements are vulnerable to climate change. These are concluded under the assumption that **future water availability** will remain the same as today.

IWT does not take into account **future water availability**. Climate change can alter the form, **intensity and timing of precipitation and runoff**. The Assumption regarding the supplies of water for agricultural purposes and industrial needs does not hold true.

What is the way forward to reconcile the differences of India and Pakistan on IWT?

Two cardinal principles of international watercourse law can be helpful. These are **equitable and reasonable utilization (ERU)** and the **principle not to cause significant harm or no harm rule (NHR)**.

ERU requires that the states need to be guided by the factors mentioned in **Article 6 of the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses 1997**, including climate change.

The NHR stipulates that any riparian state planning a project on a shared watercourse, which could potentially impact other neighboring riparian states, must take necessary actions to **prevent harm**. This includes conducting a **transboundary environmental impact assessment** as part of the precautionary measures

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In a situation of conflict between different uses of water, it is suggested in **Article 10 of the 1997 Convention to lean on “vital human needs”** in the context of the ERU and the NHR.

‘**Vital human needs**’ principle is debatable but the inclusion of these principles in the IWT will help in resolving the differences.

The World Bank may forge a **transnational alliance of epistemic communities** to build **convergent state policies**. It can lead to inclusion of these two principles in the IWT.

16. Missing numbers – on statistical system

Source– The post is based on the article “**Missing numbers**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **20th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance: issues related to government statistical system

News- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has formed a new Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS). It will advise on official data, including the household surveys carried out by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

It has a broader mandate to help design surveys for all types of data, identify data gaps that must be plugged, and conduct pilot surveys for new data sets.

Why is there a need for timely conduct of Household Consumer Expenditure Survey?

The **Household Consumer Expenditure Survey** is crucial not only for **monitoring changes in people’s living standards** but also for recalibrating **essential economic indicators** like the **Consumer Price Index and the Gross Domestic Product**.

The latest survey was carried out during 2017-18. But, the government withheld the findings in November 2019, citing concerns about data quality.

What is the way forward to improve the statistical system?

The responsibility for releasing data should rest with the **National Statistical Commission**. Undermining one’s own systems might achieve temporary goals. But, it ultimately undermines the ability to demonstrate **effective governance outcomes**.

The Standing Committee on Statistics can play a proactive role in **rebuilding trust** between India’s respected statistical system and data users. This **trust deficit** has resulted in an absence of official data.

17. President Ranil Wickremesinghe in Delhi: Sri Lanka and India, five things to do

Source: This post is based on the article “**President Ranil Wickremesinghe in Delhi: Sri Lanka and India, five things to do**” published in Indian Express on 20th July.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – India and its neighborhood

News: Sri Lanka’s President Ranil Wickremesinghe is visiting India to finalize several investments, especially in energy, infrastructure, and tourism.

What are the post crisis developments in India-Sri Lanka Relations?

After Sri Lanka’s sovereign debt default, India’s Neighborhood First policy was evident in its aid to Sri.

India provided \$5 billion in economic aid to Sri Lanka during its crisis in 2022, leading to the IMF’s \$3 billion programme in March 2023.

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Indian government has set an agenda for investing in renewable energy, infrastructure, and tourism in Sri Lanka. Indian companies, including the Adani Group and the Tata Group, are investing in Sri Lanka, according to the government's aim.

What are the opportunities in the India-Sri Lanka relations?

India's most significant concern with Sri Lanka is the **deep presence of China**, whose cumulative investments account for 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 2021 GDP and 10.8 per cent of the country's foreign debt. Keeping Sri Lanka close will help India keep China at its periphery.

A determined Neighbourhood First policy from India **will uplift South Asia's regional attractiveness**. Strategically, the bilateral engagement could naturally extend to the Indian Ocean, and beyond it, to the Indo-Pacific.

India's aid and investments in Sri Lanka can lead **to increased trade and the building of a robust South Asian supply chain**. South Asian countries have lower hourly wages than China, therefore it can develop export processing zones and industrial clusters supplemented by a good supply chain network.

What more needs to be done?

India and Sri Lanka currently **have a give-take relationship**, with India providing aid. The goal is to make this relationship reciprocal, **turning aid into trade**, similar to the India-Japan bilateral relationship. For example, India is still the largest recipient of Japan's overseas aid, but it is also India's fifth-largest investor, with a cumulative investment of \$38.7 billion.

Currently, Indian **aid is routed via multiple ministries and agencies**. India can consolidate its fragmented aid program through a single development bank. Talks should be accelerated for a comprehensive and high-quality India-Sri Lanka free trade deal focusing on supply chains and foreign investment.

While **India's digital public infrastructure** led by UPI and open-source fintech, is being accepted globally, it has not entered in the south Asian countries. Sri Lanka should try to approach India for adaptation of its digital public infrastructure.

India and Sri Lanka should develop a mechanism **for early warnings and methods for economic crisis**. **For example**, ASEAN countries adopted a mutual monitoring mechanism after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997.

[18. Sanjay Srivastava writes: Parliament, now, is a gated community](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Sanjay Srivastava writes: Parliament, now, is a gated community”** published in **“The Times of India”** on **20th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Political institutions

News- The article explains the importance of Parliament as a process for strengthening democracy.

Why is it important to imagine Parliament both as space and process?

The **assertion of sovereignty** is not only conveyed through **symbolic displays of governance** but also through the **actual governing processes**.

Using the same parliament architecture, after independence, that once used for oppression of the people was more than just a symbol. It tells a story of **seizing control** from the previous ruling power, who justified their superiority by characterising the locals as incapable of self-rule.

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The physical space of Parliament and the **governing processes** it contains are deeply interconnected. The relationship between Parliament as a building and the processes and the people it represents has not fulfilled the promise of the early post-colonial period.

How Parliament as an institution has not fulfilled its promise?

In the Indian context, the decline of Parliament's influence in the lives of the people is primarily attributed to the **shifting concept of the nation-state**.

After gaining independence, the state had a **clear responsibility**: to **serve the nation and its people**. It was recognized that the interests and lives of the people were distinct from that of the state.

However, over time, there has been a shift. State itself is increasingly being **equated with the nation**. As a result, there has been a growing tendency to unquestioningly accept, whatever the state says and does. It is also justified as the **best interest of the people**.

The initial **commitment to a democracy** led by the people has been replaced by one controlled by the state. Parliament has undergone a **transformation**. It **resembles a fortress**. It has **distanced itself from society**, placing itself above rather than alongside it.

It has become akin to a **gated community**. The construction of the new Parliament House has only exacerbated this trend. It **portrays governance** as a **grand monument** disconnected from the people.

[19. Seeing forests everywhere: A cure is finally within sight](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Seeing forests everywhere: A cure is finally within sight**" published in **Live Mint** on **21st July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **About** Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023

News: The Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023 will be discussed in the monsoon session of the Parliament.

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

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

What was the need of Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023?

Delay in Approval Process: The existing Forest Conservation Act requires consent from numerous authorities at the state and national levels before engaging in any non-forest activity in an area designated as 'forest.'

This approval process was very difficult and challenging. It took almost a year even for minor requests like building access paths on the designated forest land.

Judgment Errors: The Union government, with the amendment, aims to rectify judicial errors made in the **Godavarman case** regarding the scope of forest laws in India.

The court in the case expanded the scope of the Forest Conservation Act to all land parcels recorded as forest in any government records. This led to debates and confusions about whether a piece of land was actually a forest or a fragile ecosystem.

The court decision also affected the landowners because land once classified as a forest can hardly be used for any other purpose. This created inconsistencies in land records, affecting various businesses.

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For instance, approximately 30 resorts in Karnataka became a subject of dispute between the state's revenue and forest authorities due to conflicting views on whether the land they were utilizing was classified as forest land or not.

The court judgement also discouraged state governments from reclassifying property that did not meet the criteria for forest status.

For instance, footpaths were classified as 'strip forests,' creating unnecessary hurdles for people who needed access roads to their properties.

The order further weakened property rights by extending the Forest Conservation Act to all land parcels that met the dictionary definition of 'forest,' including privately owned land.

This had implication on constructing buildings even on the land owned by an individual.

Hence, it was essential for Parliament to rectify the situation and for this it has come with the Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

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

Read Here: [Green washing – Changes to conservation laws must be backed by scientific evidence](#) and [Trading forests for trees](#)

What can be the way ahead?

The broad definition of forests serves as a cautionary regarding policymaking falling under the control of the judiciary.

Hence, it is now crucial to rectify this situation, prioritize the well-being of both forests and non-forest land, and restore the proper balance in policymaking.

20. [India's data protection law needs refinement](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"India's data protection law needs refinement"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **21st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- e-governance

Relevance: Issue related to data protection

News- The government will table the Draft Data Protection Bill in the current session of the Parliament.

What are issues related to the Draft Data Protection Bill?

Scope and definition– the Bill's **scope and effectiveness** in **protecting the privacy** of Indian citizens remain limited. The DPDP Bill solely focuses on safeguarding **personal data**, which is data that can **directly or indirectly identify** an individual.

However, in the contemporary data economy, entities utilise **various types of data**, including **both personal and non-personal data**, to target, profile, predict, and monitor users.

Non-personal data typically refers to **anonymous data** that does not pertain to any specific individual. Example is **aggregated data** on products viewed by numerous users on Amazon between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m.

When combined with other datasets, this non-personal data can **potentially identify** individuals.

The **re-identification of non-personal data** poses significant **privacy risks** that are not addressed in the latest draft of the DPDP Bill.

The Bill could include a penal provision that imposes **financial penalties** on data-processing entities for **re-identifying non-personal data** as **personal data**.

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Data protection board– The Proposed data protection board cannot initiate a **proceeding of its own accord**.

According to the Bill, the board is the **designated authority** responsible for **enforcing the law**. It can initiate a proceeding for adjudication only if a complaint is filed by an affected party or if directed to do so by the government or a court.

In the data economy, users have **limited control and knowledge** about **data transfers and exchanges**. The constantly **evolving and complex nature of data** processing puts users at a disadvantage compared to the entities utilizing their data.

For instance, a food delivery app could violate sell data to data brokers, and as an individual, user might lack the resources or motivation to approach the data protection board.

However, the board could be better positioned to take action against the food delivery app on behalf of all affected users. The DPDP Bill could have provisions allowing the **data protection board** to initiate complaints on its own.

[21. Is the delimitation question settled?](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A job and career right the disabled cannot be denied**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **21st July 2023**.

Syllabus : GS2- Polity

Relevance: Issues related to electoral matters

News- The article explains the issue of delimitation.

What are some facts about delimitation?

Delimitation is the process of **redrawing the boundaries** of Lok Sabha and State Assembly constituencies to ensure nearly **equal representation of voters in each seat**.

The most recent delimitation process took place in 1976, and the **existing boundaries** were determined based on the **2001 Census data**. However, the number of Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats remained fixed according to the **1971 Census figures**.

In 2002, a **constitutional amendment** was introduced. It froze the **delimitation exercise** until the first Census **conducted after the year 2026**.

This implies that any revision to the constituency boundaries will not occur until the **new Census data** becomes available after 2026.

Why was it decided to freeze delimitation based on decennial population data, for 25 years after the 1976 delimitation?

The delimitation carried out in 1976 was based on the **population data from 1971**. Subsequently, in 2002, delimitation was conducted, but the issue of **population imbalances** persisted.

As a result, there was a decision to refrain from **further delimitation** until after the **first Census conducted after 2026**.

The reason for this decision was the significant **disparity in population growth rates** between the northern and southern states.

Northern states such as Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar were experiencing **decennial growth rates ranging from 12% to 15%**, while the southern states had **growth rates between 6% and 10%**.

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Despite the passage of time between 2011 and 2021, there was no **balancing effect** on the population growth rates. It is anticipated that this balancing process will take place after the Census conducted in 2026.

Why was there no redistribution of Lok Sabha seats across State boundaries in 2002?

The boundaries of Lok Sabha constituencies were redrawn in 2002. Bu, there was no change in the **total number of seats in particular States**.

The number of seats is determined by Parliament, and in cases of **State reorganisation**, it is specified in the States **Reorganisation Act**. For instance, when Uttarakhand was formed, its Assembly was allotted 70 seats.

Parliament has the **flexibility** to adjust this principle to ensure that, in certain cases, a **relatively smaller population** continues to elect a Member of Parliament. For example, in Tripura or Manipur, two seats were allocated.

What is the way forward for the next delimitation exercise to ensure the proper presentation of each region and community?

The **regional differences in population** are clearly indicating a **demographic divergence**. It may lead to violation of the principle of **'one person, one vote, one value.'**

Parliament has the **flexibility** to ensure that the number of seats does not decrease anywhere, and even if there is an overall increase in seats.

The **ratio of parliamentary representation** between northern and southern states may widen.

To address this issue, Parliament must establish a **normative proportionality** based on population, which allows for certain deviations.

There is a need to determine the **appropriate level of proportionality**. In terms of representation, the focus should not be solely on count but also on the **characteristics of representation**.

A **standard proportionality norm** should be negotiated to ensure that **marginalised voices** are not excluded when it comes to the allocation of seats.

Representation should involve a more **comprehensive accommodation of diverse characteristics**, considering **India's diversity** and the **concentration of certain groups in the population**.

22. A race for the high seas dominion

Source: The post is based on the article **"A race for the high seas dominion"** published in **"Business standard"** on 21st July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- Distribution of key natural resources across the world & GS 2- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

News: In this article the author discusses the economic, technological, and strategic significance of the high seas, emphasizing the immense potential of marine resources and deep-sea mining. Nations, including China, the US, and India, are racing to explore and control these areas due to their value in trade, research, and strategic dominance. The piece advocates for India to enhance its capabilities and approach in this realm for future benefits.

What is the high sea?

The high seas are parts of oceans beyond national jurisdictions. They represent the global commons, shared by all of humanity.

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Covering an area 1.7 times larger than Earth's inhabited land, they make up 95% of the sea's volume.

The high seas hold immense marine resources, drive a \$2.5 trillion trade, and are rich in minerals like polymetallic nodules.

New species for medicine and biotech research are also found here.

What is the risk to high seas?

Uncontrolled activities: Increased human activity can harm ocean ecology.

Mining: The potential extraction of minerals like polymetallic nodules can damage marine environments.

Overfishing: Dominant nations, like China with its 1,900 vessels, risk depleting fish stocks.

New species threat: Exploration can disturb undiscovered species, impacting potential medical and biotech research.

Environmental concerns: Deep-sea mining, especially without sustainable methods, can harm marine ecosystems.

What are the significances of high seas?

Economic Importance:

Drives a substantial trade: The high seas contribute to a global trade valued at \$2.5 trillion, making up nearly 3% of the world's GDP.

Fishing potential: Major nations like China (with its 1,900 vessels), Taiwan, Japan, and more have significant fishing operations. Valuable species like tuna and sharks are abundant.

Treasure of new species: Besides known marine life, the high seas may harbor undiscovered species that could be vital for medical and biotechnological advancements.

Mineral wealth: They contain vast amounts of essential minerals such as polymetallic nodules, rare earth metals, and others like copper and gold.

Technological Significance:

Deep-sea exploration: Achieving depths has become a technological race. The US reached 10,925 meters in 2012, while China hit just below 10,000 meters in 2020.

Advancements needed: Sustainable mining techniques are required to protect the environment, especially to minimize plumes from mineral dust.

India's capabilities: Currently, India can only send unmanned submersibles but aims to develop technology for deeper manned missions.

Strategic Importance:

Symbol of global dominance: Controlling the high seas indicates international influence.

Security concerns: China's positioning of ships in strategic oceanic locations impacts regional marine security.

Breaking dependencies: The US views deep-sea mining as a chance to reduce dependency on China for critical minerals, given China's control over resources like gallium and germanium.

India's stake: The Indian Ocean's high seas are 19 times India's landmass, making their control strategically vital for the nation.

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What should India do?

Deep-sea Exploration: India aims to send manned submersibles to 6,000 meters but currently only has unmanned capability. This should be improved upon.

Mineral Mining: India's allotted areas in the Indian Ocean, like the 75,000 square km in the Central Indian Ocean Basin, have potential resources like nickel, copper, cobalt, and manganese. India should develop the capability to mine them.

Collaborate: Consider partnering with like-minded nations, such as the QUAD, for shared benefits and knowledge exchange.

Promote Sustainability: Champion technologies that allow for sustainable exploitation of the high seas' resources.

Strategic Presence: Ensure dominance in the Indian Ocean to counteract the influence of nations like China.

23. [Express View on Ayushman Bharat: A health warning](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Express View on Ayushman Bharat: A health warning**" published in **The Indian express** on 21st July 2023.

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

News: The author discusses the achievements and shortcomings of India's Ayushman Bharat healthcare scheme. It highlights a fraud case at Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi where a doctor deceived critically-ill patients, suggesting the need for better patient awareness and a more compassionate approach.

What is Ayushman Bharat healthcare scheme?

Read here: [Ayushman Bharat programme](#)

What are the achievements of India's Ayushman Bharat healthcare scheme?

Impact: Over 5 crore hospitalizations since its inception.

Financial Relief: Decreased out-of-pocket health expenses from 62% in 2015 to 47% in 2020.

Digital Tools: Health ministry employed AI to detect impersonation and false claims.

Benefit Outreach: Provides a solution for financially stressed families and medical migrants.

What are the shortcomings of India's Ayushman Bharat healthcare scheme?

Fraud Cases: A neurosurgeon at Safdarjung Hospital deceived critically-ill patients. Like, families of the ill are misled into choosing costlier treatments over scheme benefits.

Delayed Benefits: Some doctors mislead patients, saying scheme benefits take months.

Lack of Awareness: Patients need better understanding of scheme benefits.

Trust Issues: Some view hospitals as intimidating, especially during financial stress.

What should be done?

Strict Oversight: Address frauds, like the Safdarjung Hospital incident, through robust monitoring.

Transparent Communication: Ensure doctors provide clear information about ailments and treatments.

Digital Aids: Continue using AI and other tools to detect impersonation and false claims.

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Patient-Centric Approach: Make the system more patient-friendly to counteract fear and distrust.

[24. Mediate, Don't Litigate-Mediation Bill is a way to reduce the judicial backlog. Governments shouldn't be exempted from it](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Mediate, Don't Litigate-Mediation Bill is a way to reduce the judicial backlog. Governments shouldn't be exempted from it**" published in "Times of India" on 21st July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions

News: The Mediation Bill was cleared by the Union cabinet this week for introduction in the just-started monsoon session of Parliament.

What is mediation Bill?

Mediation Bill was introduced to address the backlog of over 45 million cases in India's judicial system, where 90% are in district and subordinate courts.

Features of Mediation Bill

Nature: Non-adversarial, consent-based.

Scope: Limited to civil and commercial disputes.

Procedure: Mandatory two-session pre-litigation mediation. If it's unsatisfactory, a disputant can opt out and switch to litigation.

Duration: Maximum 180 days, extendable by another 180 days.

Outcome: Mediation agreement is binding on all involved parties.

What are the major concerns related to Mediation Bill?

Mandatory Mediation: The Mediation Bill requires mandatory mediation before litigation. There's concern this can be misused to purposely delay cases. A suggested fix is to shorten the 180-day mediation deadline.

Government Exclusion: Bill doesn't cover the government, a major litigant, from mandatory mediation.

Alignment Issues: The bill should better synchronize with the Singapore Convention for smoother cross-border dispute resolutions.

[25. India, Australia explore easing whiskey exports, form group](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**India, Australia explore easing whiskey exports, form group**" published in **Live Mint** on **22nd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: **About India Australia** mutual recognition agreement (MRA).

News: Recently, India and Australia have formed a joint working group to consider the possibility of a mutual recognition agreement (MRA).

What is mutual recognition agreement (MRA) about?

The agreement would help Indian whiskey makers to get into the Australian market, which has a significant Indian population and growth opportunity.

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The formation of the group comes after Australia got duty-free access for its high-end wines under the [Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement \(ECTA\)](#), between India and Australia.

Why was MRA needed?

Currently, **Australian rules require the spirit to be matured for two years before it can be labelled whiskey and one year for rum.** However, this rule acts as a disadvantage for Indian liquor exporters as India does not have such rules.

Further, **Indian companies claim that spirits mature faster in India's warmer climate**, and the maturation rule restricts their access to a market with a large Indian population and good growth potential.

Companies also claim that **a two-year maturation in India will cause a 10% loss due to evaporation.** Therefore, due to these differences, a joint working group has been formed to look into the issue and find a way out.

Moreover, the Indian liquor industry is pushing for similar relaxations in the UK, where the minimum maturation period is three years.

What is the way ahead?

India is fast emerging as a producer of high-quality liquor, including single malt whiskies.

Therefore, if maturation rules are eased in the UK, Canada, and Australia, it can create substantial market opportunities for Indian producers due to the significant Indian diaspora in these countries.

[26. Express View on curbs on rice exports: Against the grain](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **"Express View on curbs on rice exports: Against the grain"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **22nd July 2023.**

Syllabus: GS2- Economy

Relevance: Government policies and approach towards trade.

News- The Narendra Modi government has decided to ban all non-basmati white rice shipments. Henceforth, only two categories of rice will be allowed for export.

What can be the implication of this move by the government?

The **world's total rice exports** was 55.6 mt in 2023-23. India's share was **more than 40%.**

India has an important role in the **global rice trade.** It is similar to that of Indonesia and Malaysia in palm oil.

Rice suppliers like Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan, US and Myanmar cannot fill the vacuum left by India. It will lead to an **increase in world prices.**

What can be the possible reasons for the government's move to ban rice exports?

There are concerns related to **domestic supply.** Current rice crops may be impacted due to the **below-average monsoon rainfall** in significant rice-growing states.

Although certain states such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh have received adequate rainfall in the past week, the impact of **delayed plantings** on yields is yet to be observed.

Another factor contributing to uncertainty is the **El Niño phenomenon.** It can affect the **monsoon's performance** in the second half of the season. This could have repercussions on the growth of kharif rice and the upcoming rabi wheat crop.

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What are two crucial aspects related to this move that should be considered by the government?

Firstly, there is the **issue of credibility**. If India's Agriculture Ministry has reported **record-high production of wheat and rice** in 2022-23, then there is no need to ban the exports of these cereals. This raises doubts about the **reliability of the official output estimates**.

Secondly, the government should be mindful of its reputation as a **dependable global supplier**.

Establishing markets requires significant **time and effort**. It can easily be undermined by hasty decisions.

If the goal is to curb domestic inflation by discouraging exports, a more **appropriate approach** would be to **impose tariffs** or set a **minimum price** below which shipments are not allowed. Implementing **blanket export bans** can cause more harm than good.

27. The right approach – SC observations on bail system

Source– The post is based on the article **“The right approach”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **22nd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance: Issues related to criminal justice system

News- Recently, SC granted regular bail to activist Teesta Setalvad.

What are the observations of SC in this case?

Courts should adopt a **common-sense approach** for granting bail. It should avoid the tendency to keep someone in prison solely based on **strong opposition** from the police.

The Supreme Court of India rejected the Gujarat police's argument that the **alleged seriousness of the offence** justified denying her bail.

The case relies primarily on **documentary evidence**, all of which is already included in the charge sheet. So, the Court has no reason to keep her in **judicial custody**.

What is the importance of the verdict?

The verdict reminded us that an **order of bail must be the norm**. The factors which must be taken into account are- (a) Likelihood of the accused **fleeing justice or being available for trial**. (b) **Influencing witnesses or tampering with evidence**.

Seriousness of the offence is an important aspect. But, it should not be the **sole determining factor**.

28. Express View on Rajasthan's Minimum Income Guarantee: Limits of welfare

Source– The post is based on the article **“Express View on Rajasthan's Minimum Income Guarantee: Limits of welfare”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **22nd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Social empowerment. GS2- Government policies and interventions. GS3- Inclusive growth

Relevance: Government welfarism

News- The Rajasthan government has proposed Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill 2023.

What are the main proposals of the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill 2023?

The Act provides a rights-based approach towards building a social security net.

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The focus of the Act is on three areas: **(1) The right to minimum guaranteed income. (2) Right to guaranteed employment. (3) Right to guaranteed social security pension.**

A Gig Workers Welfare Act is proposed. **Gig workers welfare and development funds** would be set up under this Act.

The Rajasthan state government plans to implement a scheme. It will ensure a **minimum income and employment** for eligible individuals in both rural and urban areas through various **employment guarantee programs.**

The government aims to offer **125 days of work** in each region. There are special provisions for those who cannot participate in the workforce, such as the specially disabled, widows, and elders. The government intends to **provide a pension** as part of this initiative.

What are issues related to the scheme?

The approach of implementing it through an **urban employment guarantee scheme** is not the most suitable method. It could encounter several challenges.

Unlike the rural areas served by MGNREGA, the demand for work in urban regions is **not seasonal.** It makes the **scheme's design more complex.**

There are concerns regarding the **availability of suitable public works projects** in urban areas. Urban bodies have **capacity limitations** to manage such initiatives effectively.

Moreover, there are **fiscal constraints** in executing this plan. Rajasthan has a **high debt burden.** The state tends to allocate less towards more productive forms of expenditure.

A report by the RBI revealed that in 2022-23, the state announced **freebies equivalent to 8.6 percent of its own tax revenue.**

Way forward-

Greater employment opportunities at the low end of the skill spectrum.

Access to health and education and provide paths for **upward mobility.**

[29. Publisher-platform imbalances need fixing](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **"Publisher-platform imbalances need fixing"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **22nd July 2023.**

Syllabus: GS2- Governance

Relevance: Regulation of digital news media

News- The article explains the disadvantages faced by news publishers on technology platforms and the approach of various countries to regulate the interaction between them.

What are issues faced by news publishers on technology platforms?

Absence of Fair Valuation- **Digital advertising revenues** are the result of a **collaborative effort** between publishers and platforms. Publishers don't get a fair proportion of these revenues that stem from their journalism.

There are concerns related to **reliance of publishers on platforms.** These platforms often operate under **monopolistic or duopolistic conditions.**

This dependence arises due to platforms taking on **various roles in digital news markets.** They act as **intermediaries** in the search for online news content and provide the **necessary infrastructure for publishers** to engage in the online advertising market.

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Enumerative Accountability– Platforms unilaterally define the measures of the **quality and popularity** of online news. They arbitrarily change measures to suit their own priorities.

Further, they refuse to share relevant **data on advertising and viewership** with stakeholders in the news economy.

What are approaches followed by countries across the world to regulate the relationship between digital platforms and publishers?

In 2021, Australia proposed a mechanism to govern the **interaction between publishers and platforms**. But the platforms retaliated.

Facebook blocked its Australian users from accessing thousands of news sites, which included vital sources of **public information**. Ultimately, the Australian government provided some **concessions**.

Last month, **Canada's Online News Act** provided for **fair compensation** for publishers and the **sustainability of local news**. The United Kingdom is planning to **introduce legislation to regulate the relationship** between big tech and news outlets.

Brazil and South Africa are also taking steps in that direction. Indonesia has proposed **Digital Platform Responsibilities for Quality Journalism**. The United States has not taken any action.

What is the importance of these regulations?

The primary objective is to guarantee that news outlets receive a **just portion of digital advertising revenues** and have **access to the data** generated by platforms through the **sale and distribution** of online news.

Without these measures, news publishers may be compelled to accept **unfair and potentially unsustainable terms** set by platforms.

This could lead to a reluctance to invest in producing **high-quality journalism and on-the-ground reporting**. It will result in an increasing presence of **propagators of misinformation and disinformation** in the digital public sphere.

What is the Indian government approach in this regard?

Unfortunately, India has been slow in **thinking and acting** on mitigating these **twin imbalances**.

In December 2021, the Union Minister of State for Electronics and Technology said that the government has no intention to make big tech pay for news.

He has revised his positions and now acknowledges the disadvantages faced by news publishers in their **dealings with platforms**.

In 2021, the **Digital News Publishers Association** had filed a plea against Google in the Competition Commission of India. It accused Google of **unfairly valuing their digital advertising share**.

In February 2022, The **Indian Newspaper Society (INS)** filed a similar plea. It also highlighted Google's search results are not based on the **relevance of news content**. So, it creates an **uneven playing field** among various publishers.

The report issued by the **Standing Committee on Finance in December 2022**, titled '**Anti-Competitive Practices by Big Tech Companies**,' mirrored the concerns raised by the DNPA and the INS.

It emphasised that certain digital markets are **susceptible to domination** by only one or two major players. It made recommendations for **evaluating competitive behaviour** before digital markets become **monopolised**.

General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. [Why the govt has more cash, less grain to give](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why the govt has more cash, less grain to give**” published in **The Indian Express** on 17th July 2023.

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

Relevance: About uncertainties over foodgrains production

News: The article describes the government’s food grain supply three years ago and its current situation.

What was the situation of foodgrains three years ago?

Three years ago, during the pandemic, both the center and the states did not have money to make large-scale cash transfers to poor and vulnerable households.

However, there was plenty of wheat and rice in the Food Corporation of India’s (FCI) warehouses. Due to which, there was enough distribution of these foodgrains.

Along with distribution, the three years from 2020-21 also saw all-time-high grain exports from India. Thus, **there was surplus grain not only to give out free, but even to export in record quantities.**

What is the present situation?

The situation has reversed today. Governments have money, due to the resumption of economic activity, but there has been a shortage of grains.

The newly formed Karnataka government sought additional grains from FCI to fulfill its poll promise of providing 10 kg of free rice per month to all members of below-poverty-line (BPL) households. However, the FCI refused to provide it.

Hence, **the government in Karnataka is transferring cash into the bank accounts of beneficiaries.** Thus, earlier there was grain but no money. Now, there’s not much grain, but governments have money to pay PDS beneficiaries.

Why is the FCI hesitant to provide additional grains?

The total stocks of wheat and rice in the Central pool on July 1, 2023, are at a five-year low.

While these stocks are currently above the minimum required level, there are concerns regarding the monsoon and its potential impact on this year’s rice crop.

Although the country has experienced normal rainfall during the current monsoon season, **major rice-growing areas, including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, have faced significantly below-normal rainfall.**

Additionally, **the presence of El Niño**, through the 2023-24 winter, raises concerns about the monsoon’s performance in the rest of the season. This can impact the production of not just the kharif rice, but even the upcoming rabi wheat crop.

Must Read: [Protect rural incomes to tackle the current food security threat](#)

What are the concerns present with exports?

Last year, due to a poor crop, **the government banned wheat exports** in May 2022. This was followed by a prohibition on exports of broken rice and the imposition of a 20% duty on non-parboiled non-basmati rice shipments in September.

However, despite these restrictions, the last two years registered record exports of rice and wheat.

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However, **with retail cereal inflation at 12.7% in June and monsoon-related production uncertainties, the government is considering additional curbs on rice exports.**

What can be the way ahead?

India is the world's largest rice exporter, with a 40.4% share of the global trade in the cereal. Therefore, given its position, it cannot import rice even for domestic production shortfalls; instead, it can only limit exports.

Moreover, **if the FCI does not have surplus grain, it is possible that many states could follow Karnataka.** However, from a macroeconomic perspective, opting for cash transfers has an inflationary effect, while distributing free grain is deflationary.

2. [Speed and strategy – Indian Railways must get its priorities right](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Speed and strategy – Indian Railways must get its priorities right**” published in **Business Standard** on 17th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure

Relevance: measures needed to improve train services.

News: The recent launch of new Vande Bharat trains has dominated headlines. However, along with these trains, overall services of the railways need improvement.

What are the benefits and concerns associated with Vande Bharat trains?

The Vande Bharat trains have co-benefits – **a)** stimulating local manufacturing and **b)** offering an upgraded travel experience. However, two key issues need attention.

Firstly, despite their technological capabilities, **the Vande Bharat trains do not represent a significant leap in speed for regular users. Their financial sustainability is also uncertain**, particularly considering lower occupancy rates.

Secondly, improving the broader experience across regular trains is of far greater importance than ensuring that there are some aspirational, showpiece express services.

Must Read: [Vande Bharat trains: Potential and Challenges – Explained](#)

What measures can be taken to improve overall train services?

Although it is challenging to improve the overall experience due to the scale of the Indian Railways and the number of people it moves, improvement is still possible.

Reform like the one made by the past railway minister; Madhu Dandavate is notable. He introduced “**two inches of foam**” to second-class berths. Thus, improving conditions for long-distance travellers.

Similar modernized improvements should be identified and implemented. Some of them could be:

First, routes that are prone to overcrowding need to be identified, and the demand for additional general unreserved seats should be met.

Second, investing in capacity should be accompanied by investments in safety and track improvements. **For instance**, to achieve high-speed train transport, trains like the Vande Bharat need upgraded infrastructure.

Third, routes capable of accommodating speeds of 160 km/h should be prioritized for the introduction of multiple new trains in order to ensure the desired results from the investments.

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3. [Flood feud](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Flood feud**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **17th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Disaster Management

Relevance: Flood Management

News- The article emphasizes that States must coordinate to evolve a joint strategy to combat floods.

What is the present flood situation across the country?

Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi have reported record rainfall and at least 60 deaths have been confirmed.

However, **unusual inundation of Delhi** has brought to national focus the disasters.

What are the reasons stated for floods in Delhi?

Delhi’s officials have attributed this to the **flooding of the Yamuna in upstream States**, particularly at Yamunanagar in Haryana.

But, there was no **desilting of drains** ahead of the monsoon in Delhi. There has been an **accelerated large-scale concretisation** of the city.

Delhi makes a case that **huge amounts of silt due to riverbed mining from Haryana** block the natural flow of the river.

What is the way forward?

Delhi should no longer consider itself immune from urban flooding given that its population and infrastructural needs are only going to expand.

The Air Pollution **joint management strategy evolved by** National Capital Territory can act as a model for flood management.

These States **must set aside their differences** and evolve a joint strategy on countering future floods

4. [Monsoon havoc in India: How floods can be a valuable resource](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Monsoon havoc in India: How floods can be a valuable resource**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Disaster Management

Relevance: Flood Management

News- The monsoon arrived in Mumbai and New Delhi and heavy rainfall immediately followed, causing flooding in many parts of India.

What are the methods for Better Flood Management?

The focus needs to shift from flood control to **flood management** as complete flood protection for citizens, properties, and infrastructure is not feasible in India.

Instead of considering flood flows as a nuisance and discharging them into the ocean quickly, conserving a significant portion of floodwater could help reduce damages and **mitigate upcoming droughts**.

What are the structural and non-structural measures for flood management?

Structural tools include **storage reservoirs, embankments, and diversions**. These measures help reduce flood hazards.

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Storage reservoirs can **store water during high-flow periods**, moderating the flood peak, and provide water for irrigation, electricity generation, and water supply.

Non-structural methods, such as **flood forecasting, warnings, and floodplain zoning**, contribute to timely evacuation of people and regulate the use of floodplains.

What are the solutions?

Comprehensive approach for flood Management along with an appropriate mix of grey (**man-made**), blue (**water bodies**), and green (**natural**) **infrastructure**.

Flood management should adopt a **river basin approach** while considering the environmental aspects.

Upgrading hydro-infrastructure and implementing a **comprehensive flood management** program are necessary steps to address increasing **climate change and flood variabilities**.

Flood moderation, conserving flood water for future use, and adopting a combination of structural and non-structural measures are some steps.

5. [India's conglomerates are getting too big for comfort](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“India’s conglomerates are getting too big for comfort”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **17th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

News- The article explains the increasing concentration of wealth in India and increasing closeness between business and state.

What shows the increasing concentration of wealth in India?

The Adani Group continues with its acquisitions even after the Hindenburg report. **Financial markets** are lending it more money, despite its over-dependent on debt.

Tatas and the Aditya Birla empire are also performing well. The biggest of India’s big businesses seem to be thriving.

But all the businesses in India are not **making progress**. The performance of a large number of **informal enterprises** is not good and they have not recovered from **COVID-19-inflicted losses**.

As per a report by a former Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor, the share of **assets in the non-financial sectors** owned by the **Big-5 business groups** has risen from 10% in 1991 to nearly 18% in 2021. While the share of the next five has fallen from 18% to less than 9%.

What are the dangers associated with a rapid rise in industrial concentration?

It uses **market power** to **stifle competition**. It leads to **profit inflation or profiteering**, through the **manipulation of costs and prices**. The result is **extreme asset and income inequality**.

Institutions of democracy are influenced by them through means such as the **capture of the media**. The **role of civil society** as a **countervailing power** is reduced in this process.

The ultimate result is **corporate influence over political processes and the formulation of policy**.

These tendencies are not stalled by **competition in the ‘market’** but are a consequence of the functioning of markets.

Asset and income inequality increases, and therefore there is **differential power** among economic agents, the **functioning of the ‘market’** favours the rich.

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What are the emerging trends that show the narrowing of political distance between the state and big business?

- **Powerful voices** within and outside the state have **adopted neoliberalism**. This implied adoption of the view that the role of the state is not to regulate private capital, but to facilitate its growth as means to all round economic progress.

Advocates of neoliberalism argue that the competition generated by a **liberalised regime** will **counter concentration**. The reverse has happened.

In areas such as telecommunications and civil aviation, there was the initial increase in the number of new players. But a few were finally left, with **signs of collusion** among them. The consumer will be the loser.

- There is the propagation of the view that the state must help **strengthen domestic big business** against **giant global competitors**. **State policy, diplomacy and public resources** will be key instruments in this process.

Liberalisation opened Indian markets, induced **global competition for Indian businesses**. But the state is **protecting and promoting** sections of big business through **large-scale subsidies and transfers**.

- State is not interested in reducing the **influence of money in politics**. Connections of politics with big business are necessary for resources needed to **“manage” elections and win electoral support**.

Over time, there has been a change in policy to **legitimise corporate donations** to political parties, including through the **electoral bonds scheme**.

6. [How are cheetahs faring in India?](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“How are cheetahs faring in India?”** published in **“The Indian Express”** and **“Cheetah Questions”** published in **“The Times of India”** on **18th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment – Biodiversity Conservation

Relevance: Animal conservation and protection

News- Five of the relocated cheetahs and three out of four cubs born in India have passed away.

What is Project Cheetah?

Project Cheetah is an initiative in India aimed at **relocating cheetahs**.

The objective is to introduce **5-10 cheetahs each year** for the next ten years, with the goal of establishing a **self-sustaining population** of approximately 35 cheetahs.

In South Africa and Namibia cheetahs inhabit **enclosed reserves**. India’s approach involves allowing the cheetahs to thrive in **natural, wilderness settings**.

Currently, 11 of the relocated cheetahs are in the true wild, while four are being kept in specialized enclosures.

Unfortunately, five of the relocated cheetahs and three out of four cubs born in India have passed away.

Why is there a need for a medical examination of the death of cheetahs?

One of the dead cheetahs had a wound on its neck. He was infected with **maggots**. The larvae of the maggots were also found on the **radio-collar**. There was a chance that chafing from the collar is responsible for infection.

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Radio collars pose **obstructions for cheetahs**. The animal is unable to **lick itself**. It is compounded by the **moisture generated by monsoon**.

The injured African animal may have been exposed to parasites that Indian big cats are typically immune to.

Another cheetah died after being attacked by a female cheetah, which took place within their enclosure.

In May, three out of four cubs passed away due to **heat and malnourishment**, while an adult female succumbed to injuries sustained during a conflict among the animals.

Two other deaths occurred in February and April, caused by **renal infection and cardiovascular issues**, respectively.

According to the Ministry of Environment, cheetah cubs in the wild experience a significantly **high mortality rate** compared to tigers and lions. They have a **survival rate of only 10%**. However, deaths in Kuno, except for one, have occurred among the cheetahs in the enclosure.

What are issues related to the cheetah relocation programme?

Kuno National Park has **too little space and prey for 20 cheetahs**. It has **three cheetahs per 100 sq. km** compared to **one cheetah per 100 sq. km** in Africa. A **cheetah's home range** is over 1,600 sq. km of unfenced territory. Whereas area of Kuno is 750 sq. km.

The **prolonged confinement of cheetahs in quarantine** has had adverse effects on their **ability to adapt** and has led to **psychological adjustment issues**.

Unlike tigers and leopards, cheetahs are **comparatively fragile creatures** and are more prone to **sustaining fatal injuries** in the wild.

At present, Indian cheetahs do not **encounter competition** from similar predators like lions and leopards. However, it remains uncertain whether these animals can **effectively establish** their presence in India over time.

7. [Chandrayaan-3: Small step to moon, giant leap for India's space journey](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Chandrayaan-3: Small step to moon, giant leap for India's space journey**" published in "The Indian Express" on 18th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Awareness in the fields of Space

News: In this article author discusses the journey and significance of India's Chandrayaan-3 mission to the Moon, its role in promoting India's global space reputation, private sector involvement, international collaborations through the Artemis Accords, and its inspiring effect on future generations.

How the India's private sector contribution to Chandrayaan-3?

1. Chandrayaan-3 marks the first time India's private sector has collaborated with ISRO on a major space mission.

2. The lunar lander and rover for the mission were developed by a consortium of Indian companies in partnership with ISRO laboratories.

3. India's private sector also contributed to the development of ground control systems for the mission, working alongside ISRO.

4. Data from the mission will be processed and analyzed largely by India's private sector.

5. This collaboration illustrates the Indian government's commitment to its Space Policy 2023, which aims to boost the commercial presence of India's space program.

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6. By collaborating on Chandrayaan-3, the private sector showcases its capabilities, potentially attracting more investment and positioning itself as a significant player in the international space industry.

What are the Significances of Chandrayaan-3?

Advancement in lunar exploration: Chandrayaan-3 is a significant stride in India's lunar exploration program. The mission aims to soft land near the Moon's unexplored South Pole, where it will collect important data about geographical features and potential resources. It will contribute valuable insights to our understanding of the Moon, and by extension, Earth.

Boosting India's global space reputation: This mission also plays a critical role in building India's reputation in the international space community. Success in such a complex endeavor will demonstrate India's growing space capabilities to the world.

Promoting commercial presence in space: Chandrayaan-3 is in alignment with the Indian government's Space Policy 2023, which aims to stimulate a flourishing commercial presence in space. The mission is a partnership between ISRO and the Indian private sector, highlighting the potential for private industry's involvement in future space endeavors.

Influencing international collaboration: India, as a signatory to the Artemis Accords, is collaborating with other leading space agencies for Moon exploration. The success of Chandrayaan-3 could provide valuable data for these international collaborations and potentially guide future exploration efforts.

Pioneering technological boundaries: India's participation in worldwide projects like the Thirty Meter Telescope, CERN's Large Hadron Collider, LIGO-India, and the Square Kilometer Array in Radio Astronomy is evidence of its growing technological prowess. Chandrayaan-3 further cements India's position as a technological leader in space and astrophysics sectors.

Inspiring future generations: The mission is expected to inspire India's future scientists and engineers, fostering a culture of scientific research and technological innovation within the country. This impact on the nation's human capital is invaluable and hard to quantify.

8. [Express View on employment: The stress signals](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Express View on employment: The stress signals**" published in "The Indian Express" on 18th July 2023.

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

News: In this article the author discusses the rising demand for work under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), despite economic growth. They highlight high unemployment rates, especially among urban youth, and an increase in credit card defaults, indicating economic stress despite the expected growth.

About current economic and employment situation in India

- India's economy is expected to grow at 8% in the first quarter of the current financial year.
- Demand for MGNREGA work is increasing, indicating a lack of productive job opportunities in rural areas. In June, 3.04 crore households availed work under the scheme.
- The unemployment rate among urban youth is high, at 17.3% in the first quarter of 2023. For males, it was 15.6%, but for females, it was even higher at 22.9%.

How has MGNREGA evolved over the years?

Rising demand: Demand for work under MGNREGA has been consistently rising. In 2015-16, 7.2 crore individuals were part of the scheme. This number increased to 7.88 crore by 2019-20.

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Wage increase: The wage rate under MGNREGA increased from Rs 218 per person per day in 2022-23 to Rs 233.

Pandemic impact on MGNREGA: The pandemic caused a surge in demand for MGNREGA, with participation reaching 11.19 crore in 2020-21 and 10.61 crore in 2021-22. Even after a drop to 8.76 crore in 2022-23, it was higher than pre-pandemic levels.

What are the implications of high unemployment rates?

Effects on the economy: High unemployment rates can harm the economy. The demand for work under the MGNREGA scheme has risen over the years, indicating that more people are seeking employment. It implies fewer productive job opportunities in rural areas.

Impact on credit defaults and bad loans: Rising unemployment may increase credit defaults and bad loans. For instance, bad loans in the credit card segment rose to Rs 4,073 crore at the end of 2022-23 from Rs 3,122 crore the previous year. High unemployment can worsen this situation as people struggle to repay loans.

What should be done?

- Economic growth should be inclusive, providing more productive job opportunities, especially in rural areas.
- Measures should be taken to reduce the high unemployment rate among urban youth.
- Strategies to curb the rise in credit card defaults and bad loans are necessary.
- Areas showing stress, like MGNREGA demand, need close monitoring.

9. [Misplaced interest: Govt equity in chip design firms is impractical](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Misplaced interest: Govt equity in chip design firms is impractical**” published in **Business standard** on 18th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Indigenization of technology (Science and technology)

News: In this article author discusses the Indian government’s strategy to stimulate the domestic semiconductor industry, pointing out potential drawbacks due to its focus on manufacturing, bureaucratic processes, past private sector partnerships, and neglect of the broader economy.

About Government’s approach to Boosting the Domestic Semiconductor Industry

- Government aims to boost the domestic semiconductor industry.
- They will **underwrite up to 50% of foundry costs.**
- They’ve offered **₹55,392 crore production-linked incentives.**
- The Design-Linked Incentive (DLI) scheme supports local companies.
- **Goal:** retain intellectual property rights within the country.
- **Aim** to counter brain drain to Silicon Valley.
- Plan to take equity stakes in domestic chip design companies.

What are the major concerns in the Government’s Approach?

Overemphasis on manufacturing: The government’s strategy might be too focused on manufacturing, while the core value in the semiconductor business lies in design. Major players like Intel, Qualcomm, Nvidia, and AMD have chosen to invest in refining technology rather than in costly manufacturing processes.

Inadequate acknowledgement of industry dynamics: The semiconductor design industry thrives on speed, competitiveness, and resilience to failures. The government’s lengthy bureaucratic processes may stifle this innovative environment.

Past unsuccessful partnerships: Government’s previous collaborations with the private sector, like with Balco and Hindustan Zinc, cast doubt on its capability to stimulate the required competitive dynamism in the semiconductor industry.

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Neglecting broader economic context: The approach of picking industry champions without considering the wider economy could yield minimal results. A holistic approach that stimulates market creation, similar to how Silicon Valley focused on the consumer goods market, could be more effective.

What should be done?

Streamline processes: Reduce bureaucracy to foster a fast-paced, innovative industry environment.

Improve private sector partnership: Learn from past experiences to build strong, successful collaborations.

Integrated approach: Don't select industry champions in isolation; consider the wider economy.

Market creation: Help chip designers establish markets in India and abroad.

Enhance ease of doing business: Reduce frictions, making it easier for companies to operate.

Learn from successful models: Emulate Silicon Valley's strategy of focusing on fast-growing consumer goods markets.

10. [Moving ahead with small modular reactors](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Moving ahead with small modular reactors**" published in **Business standard** on 18th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- infrastructure (Energy)

News: In this article author discusses India's strategic shift towards smaller nuclear plants, specifically Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), and highlights the role of the private sector and policy changes in driving this transition.

About India's nuclear energy mix

Nuclear power represents 1.7% of India's total installed power capacity as of March 2022.

By 2032, nuclear power is predicted to constitute 2.2% of capacity and 4.4% of gross generation.

India aims to raise nuclear power to 10% of its energy mix by 2035, requiring a significant increase in nuclear capacity.

What is Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) Technology?

Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) are advanced nuclear reactors with a maximum capacity of 300 MW per unit. They are smaller, simpler, and safer than traditional reactors. SMRs can be factory-made and transported to a site for installation.

SMRs are economical and time-efficient, and unlike traditional reactors that require refueling every 1-2 years, SMRs only need refueling every 3-7 years.

What are the global advances in SMR technology?

Worldwide, over 70 SMR designs are under development in 17 countries.

Notable examples include the **U.S.'s** NuScale Power company, whose 600 MW SMR plant design has been approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

In Russia, a 77 MW SMR, Akademik Lomonosov, was operational as early as 2019.

China has also commissioned a high-temperature gas-cooled modular pebble bed demonstration SMR.

In the **U.K.**, Rolls-Royce is setting up a manufacturing facility for SMRs.

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What is India's strategy for nuclear energy transition?

Switching to small reactors: India's strategy for nuclear energy transition involves moving from larger to smaller nuclear power plants. The country is focusing on the development of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), which are simpler, safer, and more cost-effective.

Engaging the private sector: The Indian government is advocating for private sector involvement in this initiative. It's encouraging public-private partnerships for setting up SMRs across the country, inviting both domestic and foreign private companies to participate.

Setting future goals: As of March 2022, nuclear power represents 1.7% of India's total installed power capacity. The goal is to raise nuclear power to 10% of India's energy mix by 2035. This would require increasing nuclear capacity to approximately 90GW, a target that may be achieved through the development of SMRs.

What are the major suggestions given by Niti Aayog for SMR?

The NITI Aayog has published a report titled "**The Role of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) in Energy Transition.**" In this report, it suggests:

Private sector participation: NITI Aayog, India's policy think tank, suggests that the private sector should be actively involved in setting up Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). It believes this can be achieved through public-private partnerships (PPPs), which would offer shared responsibilities and benefits.

Regulatory changes: The think tank recommends creating a comprehensive regulatory regime with stringent safety standards and regular monitoring to ensure the safe operation of SMRs.

Modifying foreign investment policies: NITI Aayog proposes changes to India's foreign investment policies to enable both domestic and foreign private companies to participate in the country's SMR development. It aims to attract global nuclear power leaders, such as Westinghouse Electric, GE-Hitachi, Electricite de France, and Rosatom, to invest in India's nuclear sector.

11. [Push for GM mustard disregarding science, the law](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**A push for GM mustard disregarding science, the law**" published in **The Hindu** on **19th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science & Technology, Agriculture

Relevance: concerns associated with GM crops

News: Environmentalists in the Supreme Court of India are engaged in a battle against Delhi University's Genetically Modified (GM) Herbicide-Tolerant (HT) **mustard**.

What are GM crops?

Read Here: [What are GM crops?](#)

What are the arguments against GM crops?

Environmentalists, scientists, politicians, farmers, consumers, and the judiciary, have raised concerns about the safety, efficacy, and necessity of GM food.

The experience with Bt cotton, India's only approved GM crop, has raised concerns. Long-term research suggests that while Bt cotton initially provided some benefits to farmers, **it ultimately increased cultivation costs and risks**.

However, two Standing Committees of the Parliament independently and comprehensively examined GM crops and food.

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The first one was the Standing Committee on Agriculture in 2012, and another was the Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests in 2017.

The Supreme Court also appointed a Technical Expert Committee (**TEC**) to study the GM crops.

Must Read: [Transgenic Crops in India: Need and Challenges – Explained](#)

What were the observations made by these committees?

The two standing committees unanimously highlighted major weaknesses in the regulatory system and called for utmost caution before releasing GM food.

The Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests made a specific reference to GM mustard, and asked the government to conduct a thorough, independent, and transparent assessment of long-term biosafety, environmental risk and socio-economic impacts.

In 2013, **five out of six members of the TEC also identified serious shortcomings in the safety assessment of GM crops.**

They found HT crops are “completely unsuitable in the Indian context” and warned of serious harm to the environment, rural livelihoods and sustainable agriculture if they were released.

Therefore, these observations raise concerns for release of any HT crop and emphasize the need for comprehensive regulatory strengthening before approving GM food.

What measures are being taken by the government in promoting GM crops?

Despite the widespread political and technical consensus against HT crops, **the Indian government is proceeding with GM mustard in a manner that disregards both science and law.**

For instance, it has not placed the full biosafety dossier on GM mustard in the public domain, despite the terms of the Right to Information Act and a declaration to that effect by the Environment Ministry’s Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee.

Even in the recent hearing of the SC, **the government has argued that GM mustard should not be considered HT because the objective for developing it was to improve yields.**

However, from the science of biotechnology and ecology perspective, there is no doubt that GM mustard is an HT crop.

What lies ahead?

Instead of engaging with the constitutional issues involving public health, environmental protection and agricultural livelihoods, the government is misleading the SC by presenting irrelevant facts in the support of GM crops.

Hence, if the Supreme Court allows GM mustard to go through, it will likely pave the way for the release of other HT crops such as cotton, rice, and maize.

[12. A roadmap to eliminate poverty in India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A roadmap to eliminate poverty in India**” published in “The Indian Express” on 19th July 2023.

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

News: This article outlines India’s path to achieving a 7% growth rate. It emphasises domestic investments, technological adaptation, managing global challenges, environmental balance, and the potential of a basic income system.

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What is the current and future growth status of India?

Current growth status of India:

Per capita income: India's per capita income was \$2,379 in 2022-23.

Investment rate: The Gross Fixed Capital Formation rate in 2022-23 stood at 29.2% of GDP.

Global position: India is the world's fifth-largest economy, yet 149th out of 194 in per capita terms.

Trade Concerns: Developed nations are retreating from the free trade model, potentially impacting India's global trade prospects.

Future growth prospects for India:

Targeted growth: India aims for a 6-7% continuous annual growth.

Technological adaptation: Emphasis on integrating Artificial Intelligence in industries, though job creation remains a concern.

Environmental responsibility: Aiming for a more sustainable growth rate considering environmental constraints.

Basic income: Plans to introduce a basic income for financial security, potentially reducing other subsidies.

What are the threats to India's future growth?

Global tensions: The Ukraine-Russia conflict has impacted the overall global peace climate. Prolonged tensions can hinder international collaboration and growth prospects.

Trade barriers: Developed countries, which once championed the free trade model, are now imposing restrictions on imports. Such barriers can harm India's emerging ability to compete in global markets.

Technological disruptions: While India is poised to integrate Artificial Intelligence, it may boost productivity but not necessarily jobs. Given India's populous nature, AI's potential job-reducing ramifications can be a significant threat.

Environmental commitments: Addressing environmental concerns, like pollution reduction, can influence the overall output. Achieving a growth rate beyond 6-7% might be challenging when factoring in sustainable goals.

Developed countries' stance: Historically industrialized countries have a significant carbon footprint. If these nations push developing countries like India to bear the brunt of pollution reduction, it could strain India's growth.

Job market elasticity: With modern technology integration, India may face a lower employment elasticity concerning output, implying that even if the economy grows, it might not translate to proportional job growth.

Resource constraints: Achieving the desired Gross Fixed Capital Formation rate of 30-32% may be challenged if domestic and foreign investments don't match expectations, given the 29.2% rate of 2022-23.

What should be done?

Enhance investment rate: Target a Gross Fixed Capital Formation rate between 30-32% of GDP. With the current rate at 29.2% for 2022-23, focused efforts can bridge the gap.

Prioritize key sectors: Allocate resources to agriculture, manufacturing, and exports. This can build on existing strengths and open avenues for global trade.

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Harness technological evolution: Embrace Artificial Intelligence and its applications. While ensuring its integration, prepare the workforce for potential changes in job dynamics.

Review trade strategies: Given the changing stance of developed countries on trade, India should re-evaluate its global trade partnerships and navigate barriers.

Sustainable growth: While aiming for a 6-7% growth, integrate environmental sustainability measures. Balancing growth with environmental responsibility is crucial.

Education & skill development: Reform the education system to equip students with skills relevant to evolving industries, especially in tech domains.

Promote domestic investments: While welcoming foreign investments, especially in emerging tech sectors, prioritize and incentivize internal investments for more sustained growth.

Implement basic income: Explore introducing a basic income structure. Such a system can provide financial security, possibly leading to more consistent consumer spending and reduced reliance on other subsidies.

[13. Tackling poverty: Better job prospects will improve outcomes](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Tackling poverty: Better job prospects will improve outcomes**” published in **Business standard** on 19th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- poverty and developmental issues & GS 3- growth development and employment.

News: According to the National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review 2023, prepared by the NITI Aayog and other partners (UNDP, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative) shows that India’s multidimensional poverty dropped from 24.85% in 2015-16 to 14.96% in 2019-21.

What is Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)?

Definition: The MPI measures poverty beyond just income, considering various factors.

Aspects Covered: It includes health (nutrition and maternal health), education (school attendance and years of schooling), and living standards (sanitation, drinking water, housing, assets, etc.).

Relevance: The MPI is vital for tracking Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to reduce poverty.

Importance: It captures broader perspectives of poverty, giving a comprehensive view of an individual’s well-being.

What are the major outcomes of the “National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review 2023”?

Positive Outcomes

Significant Reduction: Multidimensional poverty in India dropped from 24.85% to 14.96% between 2015-16 and 2019-21.

Massive Exit: 135 million people moved out of multidimensional poverty during this period.

Urban Progress: In urban areas, only 5.27% of the population is multidimensionally poor.

State Improvements: Bihar witnessed a significant decline, though challenges remain.

Negative Outcomes

Rural Concerns: Rural areas have a higher rate at 19.28%, emphasizing the urban-rural divide.

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Regional Disparities: States like Bihar still have high levels at 34%, while Kerala stands at just 0.55%.

Quality of Education: Though schooling years are considered, the quality of education in many Indian schools remains unsatisfactory.

Job Challenges: India faces a lack of quality job opportunities for its rising workforce.

14. Intervention does push deprivation levels down

Source: The post is based on the article “**Intervention does push deprivation levels down**” published in **Live mint** on 19th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- poverty and developmental issues & GS 3- growth development and employment.

News: This article discusses a Niti Aayog report which highlights a decline in ‘multidimensional poverty’ in India from 2015-16 to 2019-21. It mentions the government’s significant efforts in improving sanitation, cooking fuel access, and housing, while also pointing out some challenges faced by these welfare programs.

About major outcomes of the Niti Aayog report

Drop in Poverty: ‘Multidimensional poverty’ in India reduced to 15% in 2019-21 from 25% in 2015-16.

Health Metrics: Modest gains in nutrition, maternal health, and child mortality; notable inadequacies in nutrition.

Sanitation Progress: In 2015-16, 52% of people lacked sanitation; by 2019-21, this decreased to just over 30%.

Cooking Fuel Improvement: Access to cooking fuel saw an enhancement, with deprivation dropping by 15 percentage points.

Welfare Indicators: The report focused on dimensions like health, education, and standard of living rather than just monetary measures.

How has the Indian government approached welfare?

Priority on Welfare: The Modi administration emphasized welfare, indicating no reduction in favor of market solutions.

Major Initiatives: The Swachh Bharat Mission was launched aiming to end open defecation in India, with a focus on toilet construction.

Hygiene Promotion: The mission took inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi’s advice on hygiene.

Sanitation Improvements: In 2015-16, 52% lacked sanitation, reduced to just over 30% in 2019-21.

Cooking Fuel Access: Cooking fuel deprivation decreased by nearly 15 percentage points, with efforts like Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana enrolling 96 million kitchens by 2022.

Stretch Targets: By setting ambitious goals, public projects, like the Swachh Bharat Mission, gained urgency.

Regular Updates: Ministries, like Jal Shakti, offered updates on village progress in sanitation and waste disposal.

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What are concerns in the government welfare programs?

Housing Progress: Only a minor improvement in housing with deprivation decreasing by just over 4% in five years.

PM Awas Yojana Issues: Despite being prioritized, there are tales of poor cost forecasts and overruns.

Local Corruption: The Awas Yojana has faced risks of local corruption.

Loan Defaults: Even if default rates aren't alarming in the Awas Yojana, it doesn't guarantee the program's success.

15. Why are tomato prices still high?

Source: The post is based on the article “Why are tomato prices still high?” published in **The Hindu** on **20th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Inflation

Relevance: concerns associated with volatility of tomato prices

News: The RBI has recently highlighted that the volatility of tomato prices has historically contributed to the country's overall inflation levels.

Where are tomatoes grown in India?

Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, and Gujarat, contribute nearly 50% of the total tomato output.

Tomatoes are grown both as rabi and kharif crops. However, some regions in Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh's Solan can also grow tomatoes during the monsoon months.

During the summer, **Andhra Pradesh's Madanapalle area alone accounts for all tomato production in the country.**

Further, the peak production of tomatoes was recorded in 2019-20 at 21.187 million tonnes (MT). However, it has been declining since then.

Why are the prices of tomatoes high?

First, the production of tomatoes has been low this year due to the extreme weather conditions. The farmers have also grown less tomatoes due to the low profit received from tomatoes in the previous year.

Second, delayed monsoon precipitation in southern India and Maharashtra, caused pest attacks on tomato crops. Hence, lower-quality varieties appeared in the markets earlier this year. Due to which farmers received lower profit on the crops.

While some farmers sold tomatoes at cheaper rates, others abandoned their crops, resulting in a supply shortfall.

Third, continuous rains in tomato-growing regions affected the new growing crop. Prices rose even more because the months of July and August are typically times of lower tomato production.

Fourth, due to higher profits, several farmers in Karnataka's Kolar region, who are known for substantial tomato production, moved to other crops such as beans.

How has the government responded to the rising price of tomatoes?

As per the government, the rise in price of tomatoes **is seasonal and a temporary issue.** The Consumer Affairs Ministry added that the price increase is a seasonal issue and that tomato prices have increased in these months during the last five years.

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What is the impact of rising tomato prices?

The RBI and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) are concerned over high seasonal price volatility of tomatoes and its impact on the overall Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Although TOP commodities only make up 2.20 of the CPI basket's weight, their contribution to the total CPI has been volatile, resulting in higher overall inflation.

For instance, tomato's contribution to the CPI basket in June 2022 was 8.9%, making it the highest of the 299 commodities.

Additionally, **an ICRIER analysis found** a cyclical trend in tomato pricing, with similar events taking place every other year.

How can volatility be managed?

Read Here: [Volatility in Tomato, Onion and Potato \(TOP\) prices – Explained](#)

16. NRF: A landmark initiative

Source: The post is based on the article “NRF: A landmark initiative” published in **Business Standard** on 20th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science & Technology

Relevance: About the National Research Foundation

News: The article discusses the National Research Foundation (NRF).

What is NRF?

The NRF funds scientific research rather than technological research. Academics from both public and private universities are eligible for NRF funding.

However, **scientists working at autonomous national laboratories are only eligible for NRF funds if they collaborate with an academic researcher.**

Read More: [India's National Research Foundation \(NRF\): Needs, significance and challenges](#)

Why was NRF needed?

In comparison to other nations such as South Korea, Taiwan, Israel, Singapore, and China, **India's overall R&D investment is 0.6 percent of GDP.**

Indian industry invests around 0.25 per cent of GDP in in-house R&D **compared to a world average of 1.4 percent.**

Further, unlike the rest of the world, **India conducts its research in autonomous government institutions rather than universities.** Due to which, India allocated only 0.04 percent of GDP for research done within the higher education system.

Hence, there was a need to scale the R&D investments both by the industry and by the government within the higher education system.

Read More: [India's National Research Foundation \(NRF\): Needs, significance and challenges](#)

What are the challenges with NRF?

Dividing the Funding Amount: Initially, the 50,000-crore funding was supposed to be totally funded by the government. However, in the final proposal the amount is shared by the government and private entities.

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This does not align with the global trend where the burden of funds is totally taken up by the government.

Amount below the Global Average: The funding amount of 10,000 crore per year would double research within the higher education system and raise its share from 0.04% to 0.1% of GDP. However, it still falls short of the global average of 0.35% of GDP.

Governance: The current governance structure of the NRF includes a high-level board chaired by the prime minister, with the ministers of education and science and technology as deputies. This makes it difficult to make them accountable.

However, instead of this, the board should consist of only professionals willing to dedicate the necessary time and energy and keep it free from any bureaucratic influence.

This board can then be accountable to the Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister. This would be a more effective solution to the governance of NRF.

Read More: [India's National Research Foundation \(NRF\): Needs, significance and challenges](#)

What can be the way ahead?

The NRF is indeed a landmark initiative. However, to achieve its potential, it is necessary that funds are properly utilized and those governing the NRF should be made accountable.

R&D IN INDIA AND THE WORLD

Country	National R&D spending (\$ bn)	R&D spending as a % of GDP	Industry as a % of total R&D done	Government as a % of total R&D done	Higher education as a % of total R&D done	Government funding of R&D as a % of GDP
USA	731	3.5	75	10	15	0.4
China	357	2.4	76	16	8	0.4
Japan	166	3.3	79	8	13	0.3
Germany	120	3.1	67	15	18	0.5
South Korea	79	4.8	79	10	11	0.5
UK*	47	1.7	67	7	26	0.1
Taiwan	23	3.5	82	10	8	0.4
India*	17	0.6	39	54	7	0.3
Israel	22	5.4	90	1	9	0.1
World	1,709	2.0	71	12	17	0.5

Source: OECD, Forbes, N. (2022) *The Struggle and the Promise*, Centre for Technology, Innovation and Economic Research (CTIER)
UK* share for 2019; India data is for 2020-21

SPENDING BY UNION GOVT ON R&D

Union Govt, Key Agencies for R&D	2020-21 (₹ Cr)
Defence Research & Development Organisation	157,07
Department of Space	94,74.4
Department of Atomic Energy	46,93.9
Indian Council of Agricultural Research	60,43
Department of Science & Technology	43,15.4
Council of Scientific & Industrial Research	42,02
Department of Biotechnology	18,64.4
Indian Council of Medical Research	16,11.8
Total for Key Agencies	479,11.9

Source: Union Budget Documents 2022-23; Department Websites; Centre for Technology, Innovation and Economic Research (CTIER)

Source: Images from Business Standard

17. [Combating air pollution -Rural areas should not be left out](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Combating air pollution -Rural areas should not be left out**” published in “Business standard” on 20th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Environmental pollution

News: In this article the author discusses the overlooked issue of air pollution in rural areas. It highlights its causes and the need for equal attention to both urban and rural regions in combating this pollution.

About recent air pollution data

Urban Air Pollution

Urban areas in India recorded a **PM 2.5 content of 46.8 microgram in 2022**. This is **higher than the national threshold of 40 micrograms**.

NCAP Focus: The National Clean Air Program (NCAP) targets 130 cities for a 20-30% reduction in PM 2.5 and PM 10 levels by 2024.

About Rs. 89,000 crores have been allocated for the program, focusing solely on urban areas.

Rural Air Pollution

PM 2.5 Content: Rural regions showed **almost equal PM 2.5 levels at 46.4 microgram in 2022**.

Lifespan Impact: According to the Centre for Science and Environment, **villagers lose around seven more months of their potential lifespan due to polluted air**.

What Causes Pollution in Rural Areas?

Traditional Ovens: Rural homes commonly use chulhas (clay ovens) that emit smoke.

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Conventional Fuels: Fuels like wood, crop residues, and animal dung cakes are burned for cooking.

Diesel Usage: Farm operations rely on diesel-run machinery such as tractors and water pumps.

Crop Residue Burning: Farmers burn crop leftovers, releasing pollutants into the atmosphere.

Fertilisers: Chemical fertilisers contribute to greenhouse gases, especially ammonia and nitrogen dioxide.

What's the Solution?

Rural and urban areas need equal attention in battling air pollution.

Promoting access to clean fuels and efficient use of farm inputs can help curb rural pollution.

[18. Cities, climate change and urban flooding](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Cities, climate change and urban flooding**” published in **Business standard** on 20th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Disaster and disaster management.

News: The author discusses the challenges urban areas face due to climate change, such as flooding and infrastructure damage, emphasizing the need for improved urban planning, infrastructure, and global cooperation to address these issues and promote sustainable city growth.

What are the causes of the rise in urban flooding?

Climate Change: Increases unpredictable weather patterns, leading to intense rainfall, heatwaves, and cyclones.

Unplanned Urban Growth: Rapid expansion over natural resources makes cities vulnerable.

Human Encroachment: Building on active flood channels leads to urban flooding.

Inadequate Flood Management: Many cities lack proper flood control practices. For example, urban India frequently experiences waterlogging, highlighting municipal unpreparedness.

Waste Disposal Issues: Solid waste in drainage systems exacerbates flooding.

What are the challenges urban areas face due to the rise in urban flooding?

Infrastructure Damage: Heavy rainfall and flooding can damage buildings and roads, disrupting daily life. Example: frequent waterlogging in Indian cities.

Emergency Response: Unexpected disasters strain city resources and redirect budgets from growth to recovery.

Transportation Disruption: Floods can bring essential services to a halt, affecting socioeconomic activities.

Pollution Issues: Large amounts of contaminated runoff can overwhelm urban drainage systems, causing flash floods.

Health Risks: Poor air quality and contaminated water increase public health risks.

Food, Water, and Energy Security: Natural disasters threaten these basic needs, especially in coastal cities.

Housing Issues: In many developing cities, the poor often build homes in risky, flood-prone areas, increasing the harm caused by floods.

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What should be done?

Improve Urban Planning: Focus on energy-efficient designs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the subsequent risk of severe weather.

Strengthen Infrastructure: Build systems that can withstand extreme weather. This can help prevent situations like the frequent waterlogging in Indian cities.

Prioritize Waste Management: Address the issue of solid waste in drainage systems to reduce flooding risks.

Enhance Emergency Preparedness: Cities need early warning systems for floods and other disasters.

Promote Global Cooperation: Join initiatives like the **100 Resilient Cities and the Global Covenant of Mayors** for shared solutions.

Encourage Citizen Involvement: Local action plans involving residents can support municipal efforts.

Shift to Clean Production: Embrace renewable energy and reduce industrial emissions, benefiting both climate and local air quality.

Protect Natural Resources: Ensure urban growth respects and conserves the environment.

[19. Use contextual tools and models to catalyse our climate transition](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Use contextual tools and models to catalyse our climate transition**” published in “Live mint” on 20th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

News: In this article the author discusses the importance of genuine and long-term business strategies in the climate transition, warning against short-lived tactics and emphasizing that eco-friendly investments are beneficial.

About carbon emissions data

Global Carbon Emissions:

Economic systems are now accounting for the cost of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Transition to a low-carbon economy is driven by various stakeholders.

Electric vehicles are a solution to replace traditional combustion engine vehicles.

Rice cultivation contributes 10% of global methane emissions, a GHG 25 times stronger than CO₂.

India's Carbon Emissions:

India ranks as the third-largest emitter worldwide.

Per capita emissions in India are one-fifth the global average.

With a growing middle class and manufacturing base, India's emissions will rise.

What should be done to effectively catalyze the climate transition?

Adopt Low-Carbon Technologies: Embrace alternatives for carbon-heavy industries to reduce emissions. Electric vehicles can replace traditional combustion engine vehicles, minimizing automotive emissions.

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Implement Digital Solutions: a) Optimizing supply chains can reduce carbon footprints, b) A McKinsey report highlights that **80% of an organization's emissions come from its supply chain**, signifying the importance of this optimization, c) Digital tools can monitor production processes, decreasing inefficiencies and waste, thus cutting emissions.

Encourage Innovative Food Production: Adopt technologies like CRISPR for different food production methods. Like, String Bio is a model example, using methane-based synthetic biology to improve rice yields by 30-40% while decreasing methane emissions by 60%.

Reduce Food Waste: a) **It's tied to 8-10% of all annual GHG emissions**, b) Digital-enabled supply chains can help match demand with supply for perishable items, reducing waste rates to single digits.

Develop the Carbon Accounting Market: a) Transition from legacy accounting systems that overlook the costs of earth's resources, b) The potential growth of the carbon accounting market is vast, with estimates suggesting **a leap from \$12 billion to \$65 billion by 2030**, c) Use software and hardware-led methods for scalable and authentic carbon measurement and reporting.

Promote Transparency and Accountability: Business opportunities in climate transition should prioritize transparency to counteract short-term opportunistic strategies like **greenwashing**.

[20. When El Nino and the monsoon meet in India: Rain checks for our times](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**When El Nino and the monsoon meet in India: Rain checks for our times**" published in "The Indian express" on 20th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

News: In this article author discusses the changing monsoon patterns in India due to climate factors like El Nino, its impact on agriculture and livelihoods, and suggests strategies like mapping, financial planning, and restoring ecosystems to tackle these changes.

What are the reasons for change in monsoon pattern in India?

El Nino: Characterized by warming of the Central and Eastern Equatorial Pacific Ocean, it influences global weather patterns. For example, during El Nino years, rainfall trends over 132 years show frequent drought-like conditions in India.

Indian Ocean Dipole and Madden-Julian Oscillation: These regional phenomena significantly shape monsoon dynamics.

Climatic Events: Like, in June, cyclone Biparjoy hit the western coast, leading to erratic monsoon onset in other parts.

Human Impact: As the climate changes, unpredictable monsoons occur, affecting 75% of India's rain-fed farmlands.

How can India tackle this challenge?

Mapping and Forecasting: a) Identify monsoon variability impacts, b) Create a high-resolution monsoon variability index for vulnerabilities at city and block levels, c) Strengthen early warning systems for accurate predictions.

Financial Planning and Integration: a) Merge public and private funds to handle financial challenges from erratic monsoons, b) Have the central bank monitor climate patterns like El Nino for better financial planning, c) Implement mandatory reporting as per the **Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)**.

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Ecosystem Restoration: **a)** Prioritize rehabilitating ecosystems like mangroves, wetlands, and forests, **b)** Promote nature-based solutions for climate challenges, **c)** Allocate resources for sustainable land restoration to mitigate climate impact.

Shared Responsibility: **a)** Encourage all societal sections to collaboratively address climate change, **b)** Focus on being proactive rather than using alarming rhetoric.

Adopting these strategies can ensure India's preparedness against monsoon changes and its consequences.

[21. Man-made floods of the Yamuna call for ecosystem-led solutions](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Man-made floods of the Yamuna call for ecosystem-led solutions**” published in **Live Mint** on **21st July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Disaster Management**

Relevance: **measures needed to control flash floods in Delhi.**

News: The article explains the reasons behind the floods in Delhi and provides measures to prevent them.

How are manmade flash floods caused?

Man-made flash flooding is caused by dams holding massive volumes of water and then releasing it downstream. It has the potential to cause ecological changes and calamities in downstream locations.

The flash flood on the Yamuna River that caused havoc in Delhi was caused by the discharge of 350,000 cubic meters of water from the Hathnikund barrage.

This resulted in the river's water level rising, the submergence of low-lying areas on both banks and significant back-flow in sewage-carrying storm drains, which worsened the situation.

Delhi also witnessed a flash flood in 1978. However, during that period, a larger volume of water was released from the dam compared to this year, but the water level of the Yamuna did not experience a significant rise.

What has caused a sharper rise in the water level of the Yamuna this year?

First, over time, the **width of the Yamuna's floodplains in certain areas has significantly decreased** from the river channel, and in some sections, **there are no floodplains left.**

This has led to a decrease in the flood-carrying capacity of these floodplains that usually act as a flood-way for flood water. Bunds, guide bunds and other structures built along the flood plains have also reduced the area of flood plains.

Second, there has been a loss of floodplain catchment wetlands which are capable of absorbing large volumes of flood water. Their loss over the years also contributed to the enhanced level of flood water this year.

Third, there has also been an increase in the number of bridges (road, railway and metro) across the river between the Wazirabad and Okhla barrages. These pillars act as a water-resistance, thereby increasing the level of flood water.

Fourth, concretization of floodplains in the name of river ghats has reduced the flow of water. More dams/barrages on the river upstream of Palla also contributed to frequent floods downstream.

Must Read: [Extreme rainfall events and urban floods: Explained](#)

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What steps can be taken to prevent Delhi from flooding in the future?

- Building bridges over the river should be prohibited.
- Avoiding dense plantations of trees and woody plants on floodplains, as trees provide resistance to flood water.
- Delhi's water supply can be improved by the restoration of catchment wetlands on floodplains that collect floodwaters. Off-river reservoirs can be built for this purpose.
- The creation of a network of biodiversity parks throughout the floodplains, similar to the Yamuna Biodiversity Park, would not only help rejuvenate the river, but will also assist lower flow velocity and store floodwater.
- All wetlands should be restored to retain surface run-off and should not be exploited for solid waste disposal.
- To keep flows in check, open lands around main drains should be left free. Natural storm drains should not be used as sewers.
- Establishing a single authority to oversee sustainability and protect the ecological integrity of the Yamuna's Delhi stretch.

22. [No quick fix – on National Research Foundation \(NRF\)](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**No quick fix**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **21st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: Issues related to Research & Development

News- The government will table the National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023 in the current session of the Parliament.

What are some facts about NIRF?

The plan involves the establishment of a **fresh, centralised organisation** responsible for funding research. It will be allocated with a **budget of ₹50,000 crore for the upcoming five years**.

It takes inspiration from successful models like the **United States' National Science Foundation**, which provides nearly \$8 billion in funding for college and university research, and the **European Research Council**.

What is the logic behind establishment of NIRF?

India's **research expenditure** has historically remained at a lower level. It ranges between **0.6% to 0.8% of the GDP**, which is considerably below the **1% to 2% invested** by countries heavily reliant on science and technology.

A comparison with nations like China, the U.S., and Israel reveals that these countries receive almost **70% of their research funding from the private sector**. In contrast, in India, the private sector's contribution accounted for only about **36% of the total research expenditure**.

Therefore, the government believes that the **most effective approach** to encourage university research in India is to attract **more private investment** into the research sector.

What are obstacles in the success of NIRF?

The implementation of such a proposal is currently uncertain. One suggestion is to direct the funds allocated by private companies as part of their **annual corporate CSR obligations** to the **National Research Foundation**.

Data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs indicates that in the **fiscal year 2022**, companies spent **₹14,588 crore on their CSR obligations**. Historically, around **70% of these funds** were utilised for projects related to education, healthcare, and sanitation.

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Additionally, many companies tend to invest these funds in initiatives within their **own communities**. The government does not have **any control** over how these funds are utilised. Whether the government can **compel companies** to channel some of these funds into the NRF, or **provide tax benefits** to encourage such contributions, remains to be seen

What is the way forward for the success of NIRF?

In numerous countries, the higher involvement of private sector research can be attributed to **consistent government support** provided to universities and research institutions.

This support has inspired individuals to establish companies and institutions that recognize the **significance of investing in research and development**.

The issue in India is not the lack of such companies but rather the **scarcity of their presence**. Entities like the NRF should focus on creating **favourable conditions** that motivate the growth of private sector organisations inclined towards innovation.

[23. Who is accountable in Manipur? The answer can provide justice to mob assault survivors](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Who is accountable in Manipur? The answer can provide justice to mob assault survivors**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **21st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Internal security

Relevance: Issues related to northeast

News- The article explains the current violence between Kuki and Meiteis undergoing in Manipur.

How is a system of violence operating in Manipur that is responsible for current unrest?

Since May, **social divisions** between the **Meitei and Zo-Kuki communities** have evolved into a **de facto partition**.

The violence has resulted in over a hundred deaths, thousands of people displaced, numerous churches destroyed, properties burned. A **no-man’s land** has established between the hills and the Valley, secured by the army.

The state administration has also been **divided**. **Meitei police officers** confined to the Valley, **and Kuki-Zo officers** restricted to the hills. Moreover, a significant number of bullets and arms, including machine-guns, have gone missing from various police training centres.

The conflict is further complicated by **gender politics and the balance of power between different communities**. The administration in southern Manipur is currently being governed from New Delhi. N Biren Singh government mandate is limited to the Imphal Valley.

Recent incidents, like the murder of a Naga woman in Imphal East, threaten to strain **Naga-Meitei ties** and potentially drag Nagaland into the conflict. The situation is like the **Meitei-Kuki rift** in the south that has already involved Mizoram.

Thousands of **displaced Kuki-Zo families** are being hosted by the Mizoram government. **Mizos** are openly supporting this community to protect their **ethnic kin in Manipur** from Meitei majoritarianism.

This has created **political tensions among Mizoram, Assam, and Manipur**, particularly concerning disputed boundaries.

The situation is further complicated by the **influx of drug profits and products from Myanmar**. All these factors have contributed to **escalating tensions and armed ethnic mobilisation** in Northeast India, with support from states within the Union.

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What are the driving factors behind this system of violence?

Such systems of violence are a result of **India's majoritarian politics**. The driving factor is **competing desires for regional hegemony** and demands for **access to resources and power** within the Union and not territorial separation.

Such ecosystems are benefitted by **electoral politics**. These communities become **vote-banks** for whoever advocates their cause. **Illegitimate and unaccounted cash-flows** further boost it, both of which are abundant in the Northeast.

The **polarised politics** in Manipur is sustained by **mechanisms of silence** surrounding it. Both the Prime Minister and Home Minister have maintained their silence.

On the other hand, another aspect of this silence is linked to the **systemic violence against women** in Manipur.

The alleged gang-rape of the two Kuki women was not unknown to the authorities. However, it was only after a **leaked video and public outrage** that the Manipur police finally ordered an investigation into the matter.

24. [Textiles in a tangle](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Textiles in a tangle**" published in **Business standard** on 21st July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Effects of liberalization on the economy & Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

News: The article discusses the challenges faced by Tamil Nadu's spinning mills due to a decline in demand from the US and EU, competition from other countries, high cotton import duties, and rising borrowing costs. It has resulted in many mills to seek financial relief and impacting India's textile exports.

What are the challenges faced by Tamil Nadu spinning mills?

Demand Recession: There has been a noticeable decline in demand from US and EU markets. This is evident from the fact that textile and apparel exports from India fell by 11.3% over the previous year.

Financial Strains: Many mills in Tamil Nadu are under financial pressure. They have reached out to the Indian Banks' Association seeking relief measures for their loans. It's concerning that 15% of the 1,800 affected mills are now falling under the non-performing asset category, indicating serious financial health issues.

International Competition: Exporters, especially from Tiruppur, are grappling with stiff competition from countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Cambodia. The challenge is compounded by the fact that India's textile exports face tariffs of 5.9% in the EU, while many competitors benefit from nil or significantly reduced duties.

High Import Duty on Cotton: One major issue has been the 11% import duty that India imposes on cotton. This policy has meant that for the past 15 months, Indian cotton prices have been consistently higher than those on the international market.

Domestic Market Decline: There's been a downturn in the domestic market as well. Tiruppur's domestic sales have seen a decrease by 20-25%. Large clients report having too much stock, which means they are placing fewer orders.

Cotton Procurement Issues: The spinning mills are also facing challenges in cotton procurement. There's been a massive 55% drop in cotton procurement over the last year due to the decreased global demand.

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Global Economic Concerns: Economic patterns in Europe and the US have affected demand. Europeans, facing inflation, are focusing their spending on essentials and cutting back on textile purchases. Additionally, retail giants like Walmart are closing several of their outlets in the US and EU.

Despite these challenges, there's a glimmer of hope as the industry anticipates a potential boost in demand during festivals like Diwali.

What are its implications?

Economic Impact: With textile exports dropping to \$1,624 million in June from \$1,736 million in 2022, India's economy could face substantial revenue loss.

Job Losses: Mills shutting down means potential job losses for thousands in the industry.

Global Market Position: India risks losing its competitive edge to countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam, which enjoy tariff advantages.

Domestic Market Saturation: With a 20-25% drop in domestic intake in Tiruppur, overstocking issues could arise for retailers.

Supply Chain Disruption: A 55% reduction in cotton procurement may affect the entire textile production chain.

What should be done?

Policy Revisions: Reduce the 11% import duty on cotton to make Indian textile competitive.

Financial Support: Provide mills with the requested loan relief, including extending moratoriums, to prevent more NPAs.

Trade Agreements: Pursue favorable trade agreements with the EU and US to reduce tariffs below the current 5.9% and 6.2% respectively.

Domestic Market Boost: Promote domestic consumption to clear overstocked inventory in major outlets.

Diversify Markets: Explore new international markets beyond the US and EU for export opportunities.

25. Missing the real achievements

Source: The post is based on the article "Missing the real achievements" published in **Business Standard** on 22nd July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: About India's economic scenario and challenges with it

News: The article explains India's macroeconomic achievements and challenges associated with it.

What are the macroeconomic achievements made by India?

Wholesale and consumer price inflation rates in India have fallen significantly.

The WPI rate has decreased from an average of 9% in the 1970s to around 4% in the last decade. **The CPI has also decreased, going from** 7.5 percent to less than 6 percent in the last decade.

From 1992 to 2002, the overall balance of payments surplus was \$52 billion. It has risen to \$354 billion in the most recent decade (2012-22). **This has resulted in the elimination of dollar scarcity.**

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Moreover, the reliance on aid and foreign borrowings has also decreased substantially.

Although the merchandise trade deficit has grown in comparison to earlier decades, **the expanding services export surplus has mostly neutralised it.**

Further, growing foreign investment in the last three decades has also contributed to the positive economic shift. **As a result of this, India's currency has become more stable.**

Although the rupee has continued to depreciate against the dollar, the rate of decline has slowed over time.

However, despite these achievements, India still faces challenges in becoming the fastest-growing large economy.

What are the challenges with India in becoming the fastest-growing economy?

First, in 2022, **Saudi Arabia and Vietnam surpassed India's growth rate, and the Philippines outperformed in the first quarter of 2023.** India is likewise not a beneficiary of the "China Plus One" scenario. It's Vietnam.

Second, India is at a disadvantage compared to nations like Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia because of its lack of economic integration with East Asian economies and its exclusion from the [Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership \(RCEP\)](#).

Third, Vietnam is currently on par with China in terms of exports to the West when it comes to supplying apparel to the US.

Hence, India still belongs to the group of developing players despite having a sizable market.

What can be the way ahead?

The structural improvements experienced in India over the decades have resulted in a more stable economy and currency, contributing to political stability as well.

However, despite this, India has not achieved a rapid-growth trajectory comparable to that of several East Asian economies since the mid-twentieth century. **Therefore, there is a need for introspection to address this disparity.**

[26. Menaka Guruswamy writes: Can AI be communist?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Menaka Guruswamy writes: Can AI be communist?**" published in "The Indian express" on 22nd July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; developing new technology. & Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers,

News: In this article author discusses China's draft regulations on AI, which require AI to promote socialist values and undergo state security assessments. The regulations highlight China's approach to controlling AI content and its providers. The author contrasts this with the U.S.'s focus on individual rights in AI regulations.

What are the global efforts made to introduce laws that will regulate AI?

China's Efforts to Regulate AI

China's Cyberspace Administration drafted regulations for generative AI products and services.

These products must uphold socialist values and cannot promote subversion, separatism, or false information.

AI products aiming for public use must pass a state "security assessment" before being launched.

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Providers are responsible for content generated by their AI. Violations can result in penalties as per various Chinese cybersecurity and data laws.

United States' Approach to AI Regulation

The White House released a "Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights" in October 2022.

This bill emphasizes individual rights and protections against algorithmic discrimination.

Algorithmic discrimination is defined as unjust treatment based on race, color, gender, religion, age, etc., caused by automated systems.

The U.S. model aims to protect individuals from AI bias and promotes freedom of expression.

Different countries are adopting AI regulations based on their political and legal values. While China prioritizes state control and socialist values, the U.S. emphasizes individual rights and protections against AI biases.

What are the implications of these regulations and efforts?

Implications for AI in China:

AI will promote socialist values, affecting the content and answers they generate.

Chatbots like Baidu's "Ernie" could have filtered responses based on state guidelines.

Innovation may be limited due to stringent state controls.

Providers bear the responsibility for AI content, leading to self-censorship and cautious development.

Implications for AI in the U.S.:

AI systems will prioritize individual rights and avoid algorithmic discrimination.

Companies will focus on creating unbiased AI, considering the wide range of individual attributes like race and gender.

Users can expect more transparent and just AI services.

General Implications:

Countries will shape AI based on their political and legal values.

AI development may differ regionally, causing a divergence in AI behavior and functionality.

Regulation might influence how global AI companies tailor their products for different markets.

The infusion of ideology in AI can potentially shape human opinions and beliefs.

[27. Two analyses on Manipur](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Two analyses on Manipur. The first explains why ST status for Meiteis is problematic for a number of reasons. The second details the gender dimension of the escalating ethnic violence**" published in **The Times of India** on 22nd July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India. & GS 3- Internal security

What is Manipur High Court's ruling on Meitei community's tribal status?

The Manipur High Court directed the state government to evaluate the Meitei community for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe list.

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The directive was issued on March 27, specifying that the evaluation should preferably be done within four weeks of the date of the order.

The High Court's decision missed out on the detailed process for recognizing a group as a Scheduled Tribe.

What are the Implications of recognition of schedule tribal status?

Job Reservations: Recognized tribes benefit from job reservations, influencing the power dynamics in governance.

Land Rights: In Manipur, special laws can prevent non-tribal communities from procuring tribal land, safeguarding tribal territories.

Legal Protections: Tribes can invoke the Prevention of Atrocities Act, providing added legal safeguards.

Economic Benefits: Tribes in Manipur get income tax exemptions as per Section 10 (26) of the Income Tax Act for income earned within the state.

What is the legal process for recognizing tribes?

Initial Recommendation: The first step involves the state government or Union Territory recommending a community for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe list. For Manipur, consent from **the Hill Areas Committee is also needed due to Article 371 (C)** of the Constitution.

Verification by the Registrar General: Once the state makes a recommendation, the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, under the Union home ministry, examines the proposal.

Assessment by NCST: After the state and Registrar General provide their recommendations, the proposal reaches the National Commission of Scheduled Tribes (NCST), for technical assessment. NCST is the **constitutional body created under Article 338A**. The NCST forms a panel of experts from various fields like anthropology and ethnography to evaluate the recommendation.

Final Approval: If NCST agrees with the recommendations, the matter proceeds to the Cabinet and then to Parliament for finalizing the amendment order.

What does the Lokur Report say about the Meiteis tribe?

The Lokur Committee was formed in 1965 to review the inclusion or exclusion of communities in the scheduled tribes list.

The committee recognized tribes specific to geographical areas.

For Manipur, the committee recommended tribes like the Khonjai (Kukis with sub-tribes), Nagas (with sub-tribes), Marings, and Mizos as scheduled tribes.

The Meiteis were notably absent; they weren't mentioned as a scheduled tribe in Manipur or any other state.

What are the issues faced by women in Manipur's conflict zones?

Violence and Assault: Disturbing videos have surfaced showing women being paraded and assaulted by mobs.

Use as Political Tools: Women's bodies are used to assert power and mark political boundaries. They're often reduced to symbols for different agendas.

Inconsistent Responses to Crimes: Reactions to assaults vary based on community biases. For instance, The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) reacted differently to two separate assault incidents.

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Lack of Justice: Many crimes against women go unaddressed. For example, after a video of an assault went viral, only four culprits were arrested, leaving many still at large.

What should be done?

Re-evaluate the Manipur High Court's ruling: Ensure proper legal procedures are followed for recognizing tribes.

Strengthen Justice System in Manipur: Ensure timely registration of FIRs and swift legal actions against culprits.

Enhance Women's Protection: Address assaults on women in conflict zones with urgency.

Promote Transparency: Publicize the legal process for recognizing tribes to avoid misunderstandings.

28. An Internet ban will not restore peace in Manipur

Source: The post is based on the article “An Internet ban will not restore peace in Manipur” published in “The Hindu” on 22nd July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges,

News: The Manipur government issued a blanket internet shutdown from May 3, 2023, to stop “disinformation and false rumors.

What are the critics for the internet shut down in Manipur?

Vague Justification: The shutdown orders used general terms like “thwarting anti-national activities” without specifying what these activities were. This left many uncertain about the exact reasons for the shutdown.

Lack of Concrete Evidence: The government didn't provide actual incidents or data showing harm from internet usage. For example, no details were given on how online platforms contributed to violence or misinformation in the state.

How has the judiciary responded?

A case, Aribam Dhananjay Sharma vs State of Manipur, challenges the shutdown orders.

The High Court of Manipur issued an order for partial restoration of the internet but clarity on the legal stance remains elusive.

The Supreme Court has so far avoided adjudicating on the shutdowns directly.

What are the implications of the internet shut down in Manipur?

Impact on Residents:

About 2.2 million internet users were affected by the shutdown.

Students in metropolitan cities ran out of money.

People couldn't apply for assistance or move to relief camps.

Information Flow Disruption:

A blanket shutdown prevented news from Manipur reaching the broader Indian public.

The nation remained unaware of issues in Manipur until a video clip of sexual violence went viral.

Misinformation and Consequences:

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Despite the shutdown, misinformation spread.

A press report connected misinformation to incidents of sexual violence against Kuki-Zo women.

