



9 PM

Compilation

19th to 24th June, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. [Refugees as assets to their new countries](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Responsibility and the complexities of climate leadership**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **20th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1 – Population and associated issues GS3 – internal Security

News- The article explains the status of refugees across the world. It also explains the challenges faced by displaced people.

What is the status of refugees across the world?

103 million individuals who have endured forced displacement due to conflicts and unrest worldwide.

The ongoing **wars in Ukraine, Myanmar and Sudan**, and the protracted situations in **Afghanistan, and Somalia** present an unprecedented challenge.

South and Southeast Asia are not immune to the challenges of displacement. India is home to some **250,000 forcibly displaced persons**. Women and children constitute half of that population.

What are the issues faced by Refugees and asylum seekers?

They face challenges in their **legal recognition** and in obtaining government-issued documents. It hinders their access to **essential services**, including financial support and health care.

They want **opportunities, not handouts**. They wish to be **self-reliant** and are eager to use their talents and passions to contribute to the communities hosting them.

There are examples where refugee youth have shown **extraordinary resilience and talent** when given the **right opportunity**.

Taslima, a stateless person and twice displaced Rohingya woman in India, could fulfil her dream of being educated with **career support and strong will**. She is now a role model for other girls in her community.

Ayesha, an Afghan refugee, is slowly making her way towards pursuing a career as an artist-designer. She designed a line of swimwear recently for an up-and-coming brand, which is now on sale through an online store.

What are some facts about the Global Compact on Refugees?

It acknowledges the **magnitude of the displacement crisis**. It calls for solidarity through a **whole of society approach**.

It is built on the understanding that the **responsibility** towards the forcibly displaced is not **limited to governments**. It extends to each one of us including individuals, the private sector, non-government organisations and community-based organisations.

It also recognises that the **Global South** is **disproportionately affected** and that host communities need assistance.

It strives to enhance the **international response, support host countries, promote self-reliance, and explore long-term solutions** such as resettlement and safe returns.

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What is the way forward for the well-being of refugees?

There is a need to cater to the **unique needs** of refugee youth. Youth should be engaged and include youth in the realisation of the **Sustainable Development Agenda**.

Let us embrace the principle of **equitable burden-sharing** and fulfil our responsibilities to refugees. There is a need to ensure their **well-being and the well-being of their generous host communities**.

Global community should **stand in unison** with refugees and displaced persons. It should recognise their **strength, indomitable hope, and untapped potential**.

2. [The Lotus Position – on Yoga](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “The Lotus Position” published in “The Times of India” on 23rd June 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Indian culture

Relevance- Ancient Indian system of medicine

News- The article explains the threat to universal reach of yoga from present system of patent

How can the universal reach of Yoga can be ensured?

Yoga should be **free from copyrights, free from patents and free from royalty payments**. This ancient Indian wisdom and science should help **humanity live a healthier life**. Then, yoga will work well for the poor as for the rich.

But if some Western brands **trademark the asana or breathing exercise**, it is out of **universal reach**.

Why is the patent regime is discriminatory for the traditional knowledge system of developing countries?

Much as the patent regime has helped the world by **promoting innovations**. It has also been **exploitative of developing countries**.

The **prior existing knowledge** that has been passed down through the generations is not considered equal to the **knowledge published in Western journals and databases**.

It took concerted effort to beat back a **US patent for turmeric wound-healing products** due to the **unfair patent regime**. **Biopiracy** is a constant danger.

3. [Strike a fine balance, have a just civil code](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**Strike a fine balance, have a just civil code**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **24th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Social empowerment. GS2- Indian polity

Relevance- Issues related to secularism and gender justice

News- On June 14, the Law Commission of India decided to solicit views and proposals from the public about the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

Why is the issue of personal laws and UCC related to the question of personal and religious autonomy versus the state’s authority?

Each religious group has **cultural autonomy**. So, the community should itself seek reforms. This is the justification for the adoption of **internal law reform or voluntary UCC**. **Article 29(1) of the Indian constitution** also conserves the **distinctive culture** of all citizens.

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In fact, the **Special Marriage Act, 1954** and the **Indian Succession Act, 1925** are nothing but examples of **voluntary adoption of the UCC**.

There are also **regional differences**. Kerala had abolished the **Hindu Joint Family in 1975**. Muslim marriage and divorces are to be registered in Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand under the 1876 law, and in Assam under 1935 law.

At present, not just Muslims but even Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Parsis, and Jews are governed by their own personal laws.

It is the **religious identity** that determines which personal law would apply to a group of individuals. Even reformed **Hindu Personal Law under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955** does insist on **solemnization of marriage**, through seven steps around fire.

What are the points that should be considered by the Law Commission while deciding about UCC?

Unity rather than uniformity– The Commission must consider the fact that India is a **diverse and multicultural polity**. The proposed UCC must reflect India's '**mosaic model**' of multiculturalism.

Under the Indian Constitution, the **right to cultural autonomy** defends the **Indian model of multiculturalism**.

India's **multicultural diversity** is at the crossroads with **values such as secularism**. India decided not to adopt the **French model of secularism**. Indian society '**accommodates**' and not just '**tolerates**' the wide array of group and ethnic differences.

A **homogenising lithification of identities** should not be preferred. **Unity is far more important than uniformity**. The British brought homogeneity amongst Hindus and Muslims by undermining **heterogeneity** within the two religious' communities.

Focus on gender justice– **21st Law Commission** had favoured **equality between men and women** in communities rather than **equality between communities**. A **just code** should be the **primary goal** as **just laws** are more important than **one uniform law**.

Multiculturalism cannot justify the continuation of **unjust and discriminatory personal laws**. Such provisions of the personal laws must be made consistent with **substantive equality and gender justice goals**.

Accommodation of different viewpoints– There is need to understand that when a community feels threatened, **community allegiance** becomes much stronger.

Therefore, the **Law Commission of India** should not contribute to the rise of **reactive culturalism** amongst different communities in India, including Muslims.

The Muslim community too must understand that the **MPL and Islam** are not one and the same. The **MPL** is a **jurist given law and is not entirely divine**. It is more appropriate to call it **Anglo-Muhammadian law**.

General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. [Birth Of The Matter – Single persons are denied the right to be surrogate parents on fact-free, not-quite-scientific & vague moral grounds](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Birth Of The Matter – Single persons are denied the right to be surrogate parents on fact-free, not-quite-scientific & vague moral grounds**” published in **The Times of India** on **19th June 2023**

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

Relevance: About Regulation of Surrogacy.

News: Recently, one of the last Indian singletons became a parent through surrogacy. This is because Surrogacy (Regulation) Act excluded single men and women ineligible for surrogacy alongside live-in and same-sex couples.

About the Petitions on Surrogacy (Regulation) Act

Petitions challenging the exclusions have been filed in the court. The government said that “the prism of the welfare of the child” is paramount.

On the other hand, the petitioners argue that **a)** The law commission in its 228th report has advised the government not to “Prohibit surrogacy on vague moral grounds,” **b)** The government’s welfare of the child concept does not make it clear why a single parent is considered hurtful to the welfare of a child, and **c)** The government consider Biology as the source of a strong emotional bond. But, the government’s opinion of the child being “rejected or uncared for by the parent who is not biologically related” is not correct. For instance, too many biological children are neglected and even seriously abused by their parents.

Must read: [Regulating ART and Surrogacy: Associated Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done?

Reproductive technology has advanced and revolutionized. So, citing tradition and saying who can or cannot be a family while embracing technology is wrong. Reproductive autonomy under Article 21 shouldn’t be cancelled by prejudices.

2. [Three years after Galwan, disengagement has not been followed by resolution](#)

Source: The post is based on the following article

“**The Stories On China That India Will Miss**” published in **The Times of India** on **19th June 2023**

“**Three years after Galwan, disengagement has not been followed by resolution**” published in the **Indian Express** on **19th June 2023**

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

Relevance: About India – China border dispute.

News: Three years after the Galwan clash, both India and China are no closer to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Similarly, both India and China are pursuing a tit-for-tat expulsion of journalists from China and India respectively.

About the disengagement between India and China

The disengagement by troops is at five “friction” points. These are Galwan in 2020, on the north and south banks of Pangong Lake in 2021, at Patrolling Point 17 in the Gogra-Hot Spring in

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August 2021, and PP15 in September 2022. Almost 18 rounds of talks between the area military commanders of both sides have happened so far. But, de-escalation has not taken place.

In the process of disengagement, India stepped back from areas where it was previously patrolling to create a demilitarised buffer zone at the five points where the Chinese intrusion had taken place. In official communication with the Chinese, India has stopped using the phrase “return to status quo” as it existed on April 2020.

Both sides have decided that the intrusions in the Depsang Plains and in Demchok are “legacy issues” and need not be taken up now.

What is the present state of the India – China border dispute?

Must read: [India – China border dispute: Three years after Galwan clash– Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the implications of the expulsion of journalists?

India has not approved visas for Chinese journalists since 2020, leading to a drop from 14 journalists to one. Similarly, China will see the last Indian journalist in China leave this month with the expiry of his visa.

Without reporting from the ground in China, Indian journalists will lack the ground experience that China offers and cannot observe China’s economic policies. Indians will now depend on Western media and the Anglo-Saxon narrative.

What should be done?

India needs intermediates, machinery and equipment from China, as much as China needs a market in India. India-China trade increased from \$125 billion in 2021 to \$135 billion in 2022, an 8% increase. India’s trade deficit with China continues to grow and stands at \$100 billion.

India’s measured actions such as keeping trade channels open and keeping its foreign policy options open show pragmatism in India’s approach. With India’s increased participation with the US and Quad, India should avoid seeing its own problems with China on border issues through the American security lens focussed on the Taiwan Strait.

3. [At the heart of Indo-US ties: Economics & Strategy](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “ **At the heart of Indo-US ties: Economics & Strategy**” published in **The Indian Express** on **20th june 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2- International Relations

Relevance: Indo-USA relations

News- The article explains the engagements of Indo-USA relationship.

What is the news related to?

Narendra Modi [heads to the United States](#) for an official state visit on the invitation of President Joe Biden.

What lies ahead with regard to Economic engagements?

At the heart of the Indo-US strategic partnership is deepening economic engagement and a resolve on both sides to **elevate the bilateral relationship to a “global strategic partnership”**.

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Modi's visit comes at a time when the value of trade between the two countries has touched a record **\$191 billion**, making the US India's largest trading partner. For the US, **India is the ninth largest trading partner**.

American companies have invested around **\$60 billion in India** in sectors ranging from manufacturing to telecommunications and consumer goods to aerospace.

Air India announced the **purchase of more than 200 Boeing aircraft** — a historic deal that President Biden said would “support over **one million American jobs across 44 states**”.

What are the Strategic underpinnings associated with the visit?

Central to this cooperation is also the **post-pandemic consensus** on diversifying and **deepening supply chains** with trusted countries.

Another strategic engagement is the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue**, primarily as a counter to China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean rim.

The **I2U2, a grouping** of India, Israel, the US and the United Arab Emirates, is focused on new initiatives in water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.

A new **US-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies** started this January.

The two countries established a partnership to make the **semiconductor supply chain more resilient** through private sector cooperation.

What are the challenges in India-USA relationship?

The US still has **significant export controls on India** (instituted after the 1998 nuclear test), which inhibits the free transfer of technology.

Other trade issues that require resolution are **visa delays** and the revoking of India's trade benefits under the **Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)** program in 2019.

India has signed up for three pillars of the **Indo Pacific Economic Framework** but has **opted out of the fourth pillar (trade)** citing reservations about the commitments required on environment, labour, digital trade, and public procurement.

There is **growing disquiet** within sections of the Union government over India not finding an entry into the **Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)**, a US-led partnership to secure supply chains of critical minerals that is aimed at reducing dependency on China.

4. Indian Dollar Transfers That Beat Some GOI Welfare Spends

Source: The post is based on an article “**Indian Dollar Transfers That Beat Some GOI Welfare Spends**” published in **The Times of India** on **20th June 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Indian Diaspora**

Relevance: **benefits of remittances** for India and associated challenges

News: India leads globally in remittance receipts, surpassing Mexico and China and it has reduced the cost of receiving remittances.

As per the World Bank, India has reduced the average cost of receiving remittances in the last 10 years from around 9% to 4.65% which is less than the global average of 6.30%.

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Why is there a need for lowering the cost of receiving remittances?

Low-cost leads to higher spending power.

Remittances, for India, are a source of external finance **larger in size than FDI, portfolio or development assistance flows.**

They narrow the current account deficit and being less volatile, provide stability to inflow of forex from abroad.

Studies have shown that remittances play a significant role in poverty reduction and improve health and educational outcomes of the recipient households.

Some calculations have shown that in the last five years, India's cost reduction has put an additional ₹1.2 lakh crores in the hands of predominantly low-income households.

This is almost double the annual budgetary allocation of NREGA or PM Kisan Samman Nidhi.

What determines the cost of the remittances?

There are two components –**1) Transaction fees**; and **2) Foreign exchange margin.**

Global analysis shows that transaction fees are the prime contributor to the overall cost.

However, after analyzing the cost of remittances in the countries like the US, the UK, it is found that the average foreign exchange margin costs are less than 1% in India.

Transaction fees get higher in cases where the sender and receiver do not have access to formal financial systems and when the services of an agent are involved in the collection or distribution of remittances.

However, globally, average costs are lower when Remittance Service Providers (**RSPs**) are mobile operators and when remitters/recipients use mobile money as payment instruments.

Further, **several factors like** regulatory compliance requirements, limited data exchange, non-interoperable technology platforms, and lengthy transaction chains can contribute to increased transaction costs. Insufficient competition among RSPs may also raise costs.

Must Read: [Why remittance inflows growth could slow to just 0.2% in 2023](#)

How is India overcoming these challenges?

PM Jan Dhan Yojana and use of direct benefit transfer have been transformative in fostering financial inclusion.

Unified Payments Interface (**UPI**), accompanied by accessible and affordable telecom services, is deepening the adoption of mobile mode for transactions.

The collaboration between the **RBI and the Monetary Authority of Singapore has resulted in the establishment of interoperable linkages** between the UPI in India and PayNow in Singapore.

What can be the way ahead?

The fintech sector in India has experienced significant growth which has caused innovative solutions and healthy competition. However, active support from other countries is crucial as one end of the transaction involves the country of the remitter.

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Moreover, a **significant reduction in transaction costs to 3% could save around \$25 billion annually**. More than 75% of these savings would benefit developing and least developed countries.

Countries can also learn from India in lowering the transaction cost and achieving the costs lower than the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of 3%.

5. [Grassroots peace – Free and fair elections to local bodies are not possible without peace](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Grassroots peace – Free and fair elections to local bodies are not possible without peace”** published in **The Hindu** on **20th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Relevance: About Local body elections in West Bengal.

News: Local body elections in West Bengal has scheduled for July. Ever since the notification of polls, seven persons from prominent political parties have died.

About the High Court order

In response, Calcutta High Court directed the deployment of central forces in all districts. The court said that, The State government and the State Election Commission (SEC) do not have enough resources at their disposal to conduct the mammoth exercise across the State on a single day. The court also clarified that the cost of the deployment will be borne by the Centre and not the State government.

Both, the SEC and the West Bengal government have approached the Supreme Court of India challenging the Calcutta High Court order.

Read more: [Focus on local bodies in govt push to improve ease of doing business](#)

What are the previous challenges with local body elections in West Bengal?

-In 2013, the SEC itself sought Supreme Court direction for the deployment of central forces.

-In the 2018 local body polls, there was no deployment of central forces. But, more than one-third of the seats were won by the ruling party of the state without any opposition. This is because the opposition parties were not allowed to put up any candidate in these seats.

– In the upcoming polls, the Opposition parties have not been able to file nominations in about 50 of the 341 blocks of the State amid reports of the intimidation of candidates.

Read more: [Recommendation of 15th Finance Commission and challenges faced by Local Bodies](#)

What should be done?

The Governor has **established a peace room**. It is a control room where citizens can register their grievances related to the polls. The grievances filed will be forwarded to the State government and the SEC. The Governor urged the state government to consider complaints of violence seriously. This should be done.

West Bengal was among the first States to have a three-tier panchayat system aimed at democratic decentralisation. So, all the stakeholders including political parties should ensure the exercise of electing panchayat functionaries does not turn into lawlessness and chaos.

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6. [Coach Red – Kota-type exam prep factories help students clear tough entrance tests, but at great future cost](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Coach Red – Kota-type exam prep factories help students clear tough entrance tests, but at great future cost” published in **The Times of India** on **20th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Education.

Relevance: About coaching factories.

News: India’s 23 IITs are its most internationally respected higher education brand. Of the around 11 lakh students who tried to make it into these elite institutions this year, around 43000 have crossed the JEE Advanced hurdle. With the pass rate being only 0.04%. The toppers usually say that “Coaching has become a necessity now.”

How coaching factories have deeply penetrated India’s higher education and employment?

For Medicine, NEET exam is also like JEE. So, for a state like Tamil Nadu which wants to help more government school students clear NEET, free or heavily subsidised coaching programmes are part of their new-age education policy.

UPSC exam recruits central government’s ‘Group A’ officers with a sub 0.5% success rate. This is also symbiotically tied to coaching factories.

Must read: [National Entrance cum Eligibility Test \(NEET\) – Issues and Significance](#)

What led to mushrooming of coaching factories?

The shortage of quality higher education forces parents to feel pressurised and put their children into the coaching factories.

Coaching factories are nimble and adaptive. For example, right after the BDesign course started trending among students, they came up with a coaching package in the market.

What are the issues posed by mushrooming of coaching factories?

-Though the rewards are high, the costs associated with coaching are significant. Not only money but also the toll coaching takes on the school years.

-By its very nature, groupthink limits goals and visions and thus achievements.

-They also prepare students for a professional life where professions may disappear one after another. For instance, Robotic coaching demands more and more critical and conceptual thinking not rote learning.

So, for the government to create inventiveness, creativity, humanity back into learning processes is the great challenge in the education ecosystem.

7. [Pratap Bhanu Mehta on Modi’s US visit: Making of a high point](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Pratap Bhanu Mehta on Modi’s US visit: Making of a high point” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **21st June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance – Issues related to India and US bilateral relationship

News – PM Modi is on a visit to the US.

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What is the status of India and US bilateral relationship?

The most striking thing about the current moment is the **sheer asymmetry** of what the US is offering. It is offering **high-end technology and co-production possibilities** with a power that is **not an ally**.

The US wants a **long-term partnership** where India becomes important to **US supply chains**.

India is leveraging these relationships to create a **manufacturing ecosystem**.

The situation on the border with China is critical. India's **power projection capabilities** have faced criticism. But the US is making efforts to strengthen Indian capability for **countering China**.

Why is the US accepting this asymmetrical relationship with India?

The US is being far-sighted in accepting the **asymmetry in this relationship**. This is a smartly **pre-emptive move** on the part of the US in two respects.

First, even at the low point of **Indo-US relations**, the US recognised that **India's stability** is important for it. The US is already facing a **hostile Russia, China and Iran**.

Second, even the **Middle East**, including Saudi Arabia and Israel, is slipping into **potentially adversarial territory** for the US. Europe is diverging from **America's approach to China**.

In this context, if India moves away from the US, the **current world order based on US supremacy** will upend very quickly.

The US investment in India is not just because they have a **common adversary in China**. In the long run, the US will need to ensure India is **not closer to any other power**.

The US's best investments have been when it has accepted these **asymmetrical burdens**. One of the examples is its relationship with Europe.

The second pre-emptive move is to bring India into the **US military industrial complex**. Keeping India out of that complex during the Cold War simply pushed it **towards the USSR**. But the **US defence industry** will also need the Indian market.

What is the enduring puzzle of international relations?

If China is really interested in challenging the US, it would have made **peace with India**.

China's **less assertive behaviour** on a border dispute with India is beneficial for it. It would have made **America's global standing** even more vulnerable.

8. [World Yoga Day: Yoga's challenge on the global stage](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“World Yoga Day: Yoga's challenge on the global stage”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **21st June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Indian culture, GS 2 – Health related issues

Relevance- Issues related to alternate system of medicine

News – This year the International Day of Yoga is being celebrated at the UN headquarters in New York with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in attendance.

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How has International Yoga Day contributed to the success of Yoga at a global level?

Yoga is now a **global phenomenon**. Yoga has **transcended geographical boundaries** to reach people across the world.

192 countries, including 44 Islamic countries, celebrated the first IDY in 2015. This reveals its popularity.

According to an informal assessment, over **400 million people** participated in the **2022 IDY celebrations**.

The WHO in collaboration with the Ministry of AYUSH and major yoga institutions, has developed a **new mobile app (mYoga)** to educate people about the therapeutic benefits of yoga. Therefore, no one can dismiss yoga now.

The WHO has now initiated the process of developing a **benchmark document** for standards in yoga training.

It has also helped to **promote research in yoga**. Many countries have incorporated yoga into their healthcare systems.

It has popularised yoga asanas as probable components of a **competitive sport**. For the first time, yoga asanas have been included as a sport in **Khelo India as well as the National Games**.

What is the contribution of the Indian government for yoga?

The ICCR and the Ministry of External Affairs with the support of AYUSH ministry have been promoting yoga.

Since 2018, the ICCR has been organising an **annual international conference** aimed at creating a sound understanding of the **holistic nature of yoga**.

After IDY 2015, the Government of India established **150 Swami Vivekanand District Yoga Health Centres and 1,25,000 AYUSH Health & Wellness Centres**. Yoga therapy has become popular for post-Covid rehabilitation.

The **department of AYUSH in collaboration with NIMHANS and S-VYASA University** has developed a **Tele Yoga Advisory**. Six central universities have started **full-fledged departments of yoga**.

Over 30% of private, state and deemed universities have started either a **certificate, diploma or UG/PG programmes** in yoga, since 2015.

India has established **National Yogasana Sport Federation and World Yogasana Federation**. These are going to **standardise and introduce** yogasana-based competitions at national and international levels.

The Bureau of Indian Standards has also initiated the process of creating **standards for yoga accessories**.

What are other examples of success related to yoga?

Yoga has also facilitated the **creation of start-ups** focused on yoga accessories and yoga services.

The global yoga industry revenues have **crossed \$100 billion**. **Yoga-based start-ups** are expected to increase significantly in the next one decade.

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Meditation-based mobile applications, specialised yoga mats, specialty yoga therapy and integrative medicine centres within conventional medical hospitals also have gone up substantially.

Vivekananda Health Global, a chain of **integrative medicine clinics** that began as a startup in Bengaluru, has gone global with branches in China, South Korea, Singapore and the US.

9. [A tech- tonic shift – on India-USA relations](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A tech- tonic shift**” published in **Business Standard** on **21st June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International Relations

Relevance: Indo-USA relations

News- The article emphasis the India-USA relationship

What is the news all about?

Beyond all the discussions about sharing technologies between India and the US, it is well known **that trade relations between the two are hardly technology heavy.**

The US, the world’s leading technological power, currently offers hardly any significant products to excite the Indian market; the same applies for Indian exports.

What are India’s technological engagements with other countries?

As India becomes a key player in the data network business globally, the business and safety of that architecture matters a lot.

China and India **own more undersea landing stations** than any other country except the US.

A report by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) notes that India’s total activated capacity of cable landing stations increased nine times over in just six years up to 2021. About a quarter of these cables are invested in by Europe.

The USA is interested that the ownership of these cables does not pass into Chinese hands, overtly or covertly, as European ownership gets diluted.

What is the position of India USA trade mix?

So far India’s primary export to the US is diamonds — **15.4 per cent** of the total \$78.5 billion. The key exports from the US is crude, 36 per cent of the \$50.2 billion (all figures are for FY23). Barring that the key US exports to India are **only precious metals and chemical products**

Even in services, the picture is not tech-heavy. Of the total US exports of services of India, almost half is personal travel. The Indian export basket fares better, with a large component of IT-related services.

The long-term trends make also it clear that the Indian market will not move to a higher consumption of US products from among the current available pool of freely exportable products and services.

How can ICET help to overcome this?

The iCET collaboration will make **greater cooperation in critical and emerging technologies possible**, which entails co-development and co-production of these technologies.

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What are the Issues in ICET?

In the US, these are **entirely private sector businesses**, for whom it is difficult to do business with Indian government-owned companies in nuclear, space and big tech.

President Barack Obama favored giving US insurance companies, especially the reinsurance giants, a **100 per cent FDI, in India. India is still not there.**

Present statements to elevate and expand the strategic technology partnership and defence industrial cooperation between the two countries, are ignoring the earlier areas of contentions World Trade Organization, retaliatory tariffs, currency manipulation, dumping.

This is not how China-US relations became strong in the past. They on currency convertibility, easier access for US firms into China, and copyright and patent issues initially. While high tech came later.

10. [Marx, Mao And The Bhadraklok – On West Bengal election violence](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Marx, Mao And The Bhadraklok**” published in **The Times of India** on **21st June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Electoral Reforms

Relevance: concerns over violence in West Bengal during elections

News: The article highlights the concerns over violence in elections in West Bengal.

What are the concerns over elections in West Bengal?

West Bengal has witnessed large scale violence in the past elections.

The Supreme Court recently affirmed the Calcutta High Court’s order to deploy central forces in all districts of West Bengal for the upcoming panchayat elections.

This highlights the grim situation of West Bengal that even in ordinary panchayat elections, there are chances of violence.

Due to this fear, a **significant number of panchayat seats in West Bengal** (34% in 2018) were won without opposition.

What are the probable reasons for violence in West Bengal?

The war in the 1970s between the Maoists and CPI(M) is frequently blamed for the trend of violence in West Bengal, which may be somewhat correct.

However, in the later stages, Marx and Engels advocated for peaceful transitions, to socialism after witnessing European elections. But the left in India, had difficulty in embracing it, due to **the influence of Stalin and Mao**. The violence, in the name of class struggle, attracted a section of leftists in Bengal, not Marx’s Capital.

Also, Bengal had favored violent overthrow of colonial rule. It resulted into many executions of participants by British.

What has been the political history of violence in West Bengal?

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had a large support from the people of West Bengal and **neither Mahatma Gandhi nor Nehru could match Bose’s charisma in West Bengal.**

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Gandhi's role in denying Bose the Congress presidency made a significant section of Bengali opinion cynical of the politics of non-violence. Nehru's lack of support for Bose further increased this sentiment.

Therefore, when Bose broke away from congress to form the Azad Hind Fauj, he was widely cheered in Bengal for his bravery and audacity. When he died, it was seen as an extension of the many Bengalis who were executed by the British.

Therefore, **throughout history, from the time of freedom fighters to figures like Bose and the Maoists, a section of Bengalis has embraced militancy.**

11. [More HIT than miss in India-Nepal ties](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“More HIT than miss in India-Nepal ties”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **22nd June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance– India and Nepal bilateral relations

News- Recently, Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' was on a four-day official visit to India.

What is the situation of the hydropower sector in Nepal?

Nepal has an economically viable **potential of 50,000 MW of hydropower**. But, until a decade ago, it had an installed capacity of barely 1,200 MW. It was dependent on **electricity imports from India**.

Today, Nepal has an **installed capacity of 2,200 MW**. During low demand, it can export power to India. A **400 KV transmission** is now operational. In 2021, Nepal made a modest beginning by **exporting 39 MW**.

In the lean season, Nepal does import power from India, but its dependence has **dropped from 20% to 10%** during the last five years.

What is the status of hydropower cooperation between India and Nepal?

Both sides have finalised a **long-term power trade agreement** targeting the **export of 10,000 MW within a 10-year time frame**. The **900 MW Arun III project** started in 2018 will be operational later this year.

Work has begun on a second **high voltage transmission line between Butwal and Gorakhpur**.

India has agreed to the Nepali demand for the facility to **export electricity** to Bangladesh using the **Indian grid**. It increases the prospects for **sub-regional cooperation**.

What is the status of bilateral cooperation in connectivity between two countries?

The **Rupaidiha-Nepalgunj Integrated Check Post** was inaugurated. Work has begun on the **Sunauli-Bhairahawa integrated check post** and an MoU signed for another at **Dodhara Chandni**.

There is a plan to extend the **Jaynagar-Kurta railway line** inaugurated last year.

After the **Motihari-Amlekhgunj petroleum pipeline** was operationalised in 2019, work has begun to extend it to Chitwan

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What are irritants in the India Nepal bilateral relationship?

Agnipath scheme– It impacts the recruitment of **Gurkha soldiers** into the Indian Army's Gurkha regiments, a practice that began in 1816 by the British Indian Army.

The **Agnipath revision** of the terms needs to be discussed between the two armies and the defence and finance officials concerned.

Kalapani boundary issue– It was deliberately stoked as a **nationalist cause** by Mr. Oli in 2020 when his position as Prime Minister was under threat. A **constitutional amendment** was pushed through, and Nepal's map changed unilaterally.

Resolving this will need time because a lasting solution will need political wisdom and understanding.

India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950– In Nepal, it is a general belief that the **Treaty is unfair** as it was imposed.

However, treaty enabled Nepali **nationals' with an equal treatment** in terms of employment and permitted them to apply for any government job.

The demand to review the Treaty was officially raised first in 1995. It was on the agenda of the Foreign Secretary's meeting.

There is a need for **discussions in an objective manner** that addresses the concerns of both countries.

[12. Spare a thought for psychiatric caregivers too](#)

Source– The post is based on the article "**Spare a thought for psychiatric caregivers too**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **22nd June 2023**.

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

Relevance- Mental health related issues

News- The article explains the issues faced by caregivers providing support to mental ill people

What is the prevalence of mental disorders faced by the Indian population?

According to **National Health Mission estimates**, **6%-7% of India's population** suffers from mental disorders. **One in four families** is likely to have at least one member with a **behavioural or mental health disorder**.

The situation **worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic** as long periods of isolation, financial difficulty, and uncertainty about the future increased **stress levels** across social segments.

Most of these cases remain untreated due to **ignorance and social stigma**. Without **proper diagnosis**, the patient and their families keep suffering.

What are issues faced by caregivers?

Over 90% of psychiatric patients in India live with their families. The caregiver is under considerable stress because of the **physical and emotional caregiving** along with the **social isolation, financial difficulties and troublesome behaviour of the patient**.

In nuclear families, the role falls on the spouse. **Chronic mental illness** in a nuclear household disrupts daily life and drains family resources.

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Women caregivers face challenges in **balancing caregiving, career, child rearing, and household responsibility**. They are less likely to receive **informal support** for **psychiatric treatment**.

Prolonged caregiving negatively impacts the **psychological well-being** of caregivers. Caregivers use various strategies to cope which include sharing, spirituality, hobbies. But **unhealthy coping mechanisms** can negatively impact both caregivers and patients.

The **National Mental Health Programme and the decentralised District Mental Health Programme** remain focused on the patient but neglect the caregiver.

What is the way forward for the well-being of caregivers?

It is essential to introduce a **structured intervention programme** to **educate and support** the caregivers of psychiatric patients. It should educate them about the illness and their roles and responsibilities.

Successful intervention models include **cognitive behavioural therapy, psychoeducational skill building, family counselling, and peer-support**.

A **comprehensive treatment** of severe psychiatric illnesses in the future would need building **effective partnerships** between health-care professionals, informal caregivers, and psychosocial interventions.

What are concerns related to the preparedness of health-care systems to provide caregiver support?

A lack of trained specialists hinders **cost-effective intervention model implementation**. India has **one psychiatrist and psychologist for every four lakh and 16 lakh citizens**.

Insufficient budget allocation for mental health patients also raises concerns of developing intervention for psychiatric caregivers.

private mental health institutions services are **expensive and beyond reach** for many.

Mental illnesses are excluded from the list of ailments covered by leading medical insurers in India.

Government schemes such as the flagship **Ayushman Bharat** provide coverage for mental disorders. However, coverage by private insurers **remains limited**.

Several **non-governmental organisations** and community movements such as Mind root have been engaged in **community support work** for people with mental illness and their caregivers. However, given the **severity of the issue**, their scale remains insignificant.

13. [Ban pan-masala promotions](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “Ban pan-masala promotions” published in **Business Standard** on **22nd June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Health

Relevance: concerns with the consumption of pan masala.

News: The ban on chewing tobacco (gutka) has not served the purpose because people have now shifted towards consuming pan masala, which is also harmful for health.

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When was the chewing tobacco ban?

All state governments banned the sale of chewing tobacco (gutka) and pan-masala laced with tobacco since 2011.

This ban was later overturned by the Delhi High Court judgment in 2022.

However, a Bench led by the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court overruled this 2022 judgment and upheld the appeals of the central and Delhi governments against the sale of gutka and tobacco flavoured pan-masala.

What have been the effects of banning chewing tobacco (gutka)?

Despite the ban on gutka, television and other advertisements continue to be allowed in India for pan-masala (without tobacco).

Gutka has been banned due to its cancer-causing properties, while pan-masala has been deemed acceptable, despite evidence suggesting its addictive nature.

Further, the banning of gutka has not led to lower consumption of this carcinogenic product. Instead, **the ban has led to clandestine production and distribution networks going underground.**

Similar concerns are raised regarding the banning of alcohol, heroin, and cocaine, i.e., whether banning them actually lower their consumption or their consumption are increased by illicit means.

However, in India, the limited availability of hard drugs may play a bigger role in constraining consumption than law enforcement efforts.

Must Read: [Tobacco Problem in India- An Overview](#)

What are the concerns with the consumption of pan masala?

Pan masala like that of gutka is harmful for health. However, **these are easily available in India in shops.**

Government agencies are struggling worldwide to eliminate the production of hard drugs and their consumption. Even their advertisements are not permitted in India or elsewhere.

However, Indian authorities allow pan-masala to be widely advertised all over the country. These advertisements are mostly done by famous personalities.

However, famous stars from the Indian film industry should be discouraged from appearing in such advertisements.

Why is it difficult to ban pan masala?

The revenue which pan-masala generates acts as an obstacle for its ban.

According to the International Market Analysis Research and Consulting Group, pan-masala sales revenues reached around 41,821 crores in 2021, with an annual growth rate of approximately 3.5 percent.

Therefore, given its large revenue, pan-masala producers would use all permitted mediums of advertising.

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What measures can be taken to control the consumption of pan masala?

First, the central and state governments should ban all promotions of pan-masala even without tobacco.

Second, the harmful effects of pan masala need to be explained in simple terms in all Indian languages via government sponsored messages.

Third, all pan-masala advertisements on television, radio, and print media, especially in regional languages should be prohibited.

14. [Go For The Money: Other higher education institutions should follow IIT Bombay's example, make aggressive fundraising efforts](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Go For The Money: Other higher education institutions should follow IIT Bombay's example, make aggressive fundraising efforts”** published in **The Times of India** on **22nd June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Education.

Relevance: About fund crunch in Higher Educational Institutes.

News: Nandan Nilekani donated \$38.5 million to his alma mater IIT Bombay. This raises the question of why many of India's public education institutes are so lagging in fundraising.

About the performance of the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)

It is a designated body to help raise funds. It was founded in 2017 and is a non-profit lending company for higher education institutes' infrastructure projects.

By the end of last year, HEFA had approved 141 projects worth just ₹46,700 crore, against the target of ₹1 lakh crore.

HEFA would raise funds from the private sector, but no details are available. The government as an equity contributor put in ₹1 lakh in 2022-23, and zero in 2023-2024.

What are the impacts of the fund crunch in Higher Educational Institutes?

a) 11,000 teaching posts are vacant across institutions, including central universities, **b)** When fees are increased, students either drop out or move overseas, as in the case of medical students. Since 2017, over 30 lakh students have gone abroad, 7.5 lacks in 2021 alone.

What should be done?

The government understood that government funding alone cannot make institutions world-class. So, the government asked central universities to set up endowments, including FCRA accounts.

NRI corporate leaders are more generous in giving endowments to American universities. But most of them have contributed little to India's institutions as they lack effective sales pitches like IIT-Bombay. India has 169 billionaires; 1,103 individuals with ₹1,000 crore-plus wealth. They also donate less. So, India should tap private wealth.

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15. [Friends And Benefits: Overlapping interests between India and US show that a formal alliance is not necessary for a solid relationship](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Friends And Benefits: Overlapping interests between India and US show that a formal alliance is not necessary for a solid relationship**” published in **The Times of India** on **22nd June 2023**

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

Relevance: About India-US relationship .

News: Indian PM is on a visit to the US. This visit might bury the framework that seeks to understand geopolitics through the prism of alliances.

Why the time for formal alliances have waned?

During the Cold War period, many nations functioned based on alliances. Even today, formal alliances do exist between the US and Japan. But their essence has changed since the days of the US-Soviet rivalry.

Unlike the Cold War, today’s poles, the US and China, have intertwined economies. Now, the nations started moving towards prioritising alignments over alliances.

How have India-US relations evolved so far?

India-US relationship over the last 18 years has taken place in the shadow of China’s economic uprise and its subsequent revisionism. India’s unsettled border dispute with China made an overlap of interests with the US. Across the world, countries are showing flexibility in adapting to an era of two economic giants (the US and China) locked in a strategic rivalry.

But, India’s economic growth has put India within striking distance of being the third-largest economy after the US and China. At the current rates of growth, India’s economic size should overtake Germany by 2027-28 and Japan by the end of the decade.

India’s growing market and supply capabilities have made India to be part of the initiative on critical and emerging technologies (iCET) with the US.

India is ideally placed to grab economic opportunities coming out of the US and China rivalry.

What should be done?

India and the US have an overlap of interest in multiple areas. For instance, India’s burgeoning diesel and ATF exports to the EU in 2022-23 cushioned the fallout of Russia sanctions there. These overlapping interests make an option for a solid relationship.

16. [Law Commission’s report on Uniform Civil Code — undesirable and unnecessary](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Law Commission’s report on Uniform Civil Code — undesirable and unnecessary**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd June 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the recommendations of 21st Law Commission

News: The **22nd Law Commission of India** has announced to seek the opinions of the public and recognized religious organizations regarding the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

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Previously, **the 21st Law Commission examined the UCC** and received substantial responses from stakeholders. After receiving the response, **the 21st Law Commission issued a consultation paper on the Reform of Family Law.**

What were the recommendations made by the 21st Law Commission in its report?

Uniform Civil Code (UCC): It recommended that rather than enacting a UCC, **family laws of every religion must be reformed to make them gender-just.** It talked about the uniformity of rights rather than laws.

Women Issues: The Commission emphasized that women must be guaranteed their freedom of faith without any compromise on their right to equality. It also focused on economic rights of women.

It recommended a series of reforms in the personal laws of all religions as well as the secular laws that place women and children at a disadvantage.

The report also included recommendations **concerning the rights of Parsi and Christian women** and those married under the Special Marriage Act.

Property Inheritance: The Commission criticised the **Hindu coparcenary system — the Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) property.** It stated that it was being exploited for tax evasion purposes. Hence, it recommended its abolition.

It suggested the codification of the Muslim law of inheritance and succession and bringing in uniform provisions of succession for Shias and Sunnis.

It emphasized that succession and inheritance should be determined by proximity to the deceased rather than favoring male agnates.

Furthermore, **it suggested that a childless Muslim widow should be recognized as a Class I heir** and inherit the deceased's property.

Divorce: It recommended **the introduction of “no-fault divorce” in all personal laws** and proposed that all property acquired after marriage should be divided between both parties in case of divorce.

The report also highlighted the rights of individuals with disabilities in marriages.

Muslim Polygamy: The commission noted that while polygamy is permitted within Islam, it is rarely practiced among Indian Muslims. It also noted that individuals from other religions sometimes convert to Islam solely to engage in polygamous marriages.

This observation matches with the Supreme Court's observation in Sarla Mudgal etc. vs the Union of India (1995). The court had recommended the enactment of a UCC in relation to conversion and bigamy.

Custody and Guardianship: The Commission stressed that courts must follow the **principle of the “best interest of the child” on custody and guardianship.**

Other Issues: The commission refrained from making recommendations on issues such as triple talaq, Muslim bigamy, and the constitutional validity of adultery under Section 497 of the IPC, as these matters were already being addressed by the Supreme Court or Parliament.

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What lies ahead?

Despite the 21st Law Commission's report and its recommendations, the government has not taken any action over the past five years.

Further, the 22nd Law Commission faces a challenge of coming up with strong reasons in support for the UCC as it was discarded by its predecessor.

17. [A doorway to an entrepreneurial university](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "A doorway to an entrepreneurial university" published in "The Hindu" on 23rd June 2023.

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

Relevance- Higher education

News- The University Grants Commission's move to institutionalise the concept of a 'Professor of Practice' could help bridge the gap between academia and the professional world

How interaction between different disciplines of knowledge is beneficial to the educational ecosystem?

New knowledge is always the result of **interactions between disparate or competing disciplines**.

Whenever **diverse players from different disciplines** come together, these joint ventures lead to the creation of a **whole new body of knowledge**.

University systems have always seen this. The modern university system keeps evolving. Over the years, **multidisciplinary studies** have seen **new disciplines such as biochemistry and computing science**.

What are some facts about the concept of entrepreneurial university?

Innovations that bring together **academic and industrial research work** are creating **economic and intellectual value for universities**.

This **joint enterprise of academia and industry** is entering a new phase. This is related to the **entrepreneurial university**.

One school of academia maintains that universities should be the **foundation of new knowledge and research**. Any attempt at a **commercialisation of this vision** should not be allowed.

But, the thinking among **new-age universities, and 'educational entrepreneurs'** is to ensure a **fine balance between education and enterprise**.

What are some facts about the UGC's initiative to institutionalise the concept of 'Professor of Practice'?

It is a step towards an **entrepreneurial university**.

As per UGC, the objective behind introducing a Professor of Practice is to enhance the quality of higher education by bringing **practitioners, policymakers, and skilled professionals** into the higher education system.

This will help take **real world practices and experiences** into classrooms and also **augment faculty resources** in higher education institutions. Industry and society will benefit from trained graduates who are equipped with the relevant skills.

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PoPs are often hired from **outside academia**. They may not be required to have a **PhD or other advanced research degree**. PoPs can be found in fields that include business, engineering, law, journalism, and the arts.

In the field of engineering, for example, a PoP can teach courses that focus on **practical, real-world applications** and share their insights in **applied learning**.

PoPs can serve as **ambassadors for their universities, building relationships with industry partners**. They help to connect students with **internship and job opportunities**.

They can also participate in **professional organisations and conferences** to stay up-to-date on **industry trends and best practices**.

What is the importance of innovation?

Teaching and research were the **foundational pillars** of a university in the industrial era. Innovation is the **third pillar in universities**.

Due to innovation culture, every academic will **synthesise ideas** and will lead to creation of more **start-up enterprises**.

These university-based start-ups would **incubate ideas** and **convert ideas into patents and transform patents into commercial products**.

[18. Can a shorter medical course solve rural doctor shortages?](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Can a shorter medical course solve rural doctor shortages?” published in “The Hindu” on 23rd June 2023.

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

Relevance- Issues related to rural health

News- Last month, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee asked the Health Department to consider starting a three-year diploma course for medical practitioners, who would then serve in primary health centres.

Why is the idea proposed by the West Bengal CM not a right solution?

The diploma course may not provide trained doctors to **adequately deal** with the conditions in rural areas.

Rural areas may not have **adequate facilities, infrastructure, or transport**. In case of emergency or a critical care situation, trainees will face difficulties in dealing with the situation

There are concerns regarding the **future status of these trainees**.

India has **paramedical staff like physician assistants**. They can be **trained better** to deal with emergencies. That would be a better idea than this **three-year diploma**.

Why the idea proposed by the West Bengal CM sound good?

There exists a **general aversion among professional doctors** to practise in rural areas. In West Bengal, the number of **doctors per 10,000 population** is below the national average.

So, it makes sense to drive a cadre of doctors who are capable of providing **first-level care to the rural countryside**.

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PHCs are the **most essential rung of the healthcare infrastructure** and should possess doctors who are **fully trained**. But, we can consider **mid-level healthcare providers** who function in sub centres, a rung below PHCs.

Is this a discriminatory move to provide less qualified practitioners for rural populations?

Arguments in favour– Health awareness among the rural population is not very good. Many do not have the **resources to get the medicines** they need. In such situations, if less qualified doctors are appointed in rural areas, it is not fair.

Arguments against– There is a need to **differentiate between fiscal realities and fiscal ideals**. The State has a prime responsibility in ensuring the **highest attainable quality of care**. But the realities on the ground makes it difficult to **ensure highest care**.

if there is no **perfect solution** on the horizon, and no action is taken, then it leads to even **bigger discrimination**.

Some kind of an **interim arrangement** is needed when there are not enough fully qualified doctors.

How can rural postings of doctors be encouraged?

There is a need for **hard incentives**. More doctors need to be recruited into rural areas rather than retaining them, because **recruiting practitioners and retaining** them are two different things.

To retain them in rural areas is not going to be possible for at least 30-40 years because ultimately, rural doctor shortage is a **development problem**.

Medical graduates do not want rural service as they are scared that they will get stuck there for ages. So, we must create a system where there is a **continuous chain of doctors in rural areas**.

Developed and developing countries are providing **short-term courses**. They provide care of a quality that is largely equivalent to doctors. So, **mid-level practitioners at the sub centre level** is a very important requirement today.

There is a need for a system where **full-fledged medical graduates** realise their **social obligations**. There is a need to take steps to **motivate medical graduates** to go to rural areas.

How wide disparity in the spread of our medical colleges can be tackled to address rural shortages?

Most medical colleges are **concentrated in the southern States and some in forward States like Maharashtra and Gujarat**.

About 85% of the seats are **reserved** for candidates from within those States.

Purely private investments are not sufficient to deal with this inequality. **Government investments** are also needed. Over the last decade, government medical colleges have shown a remarkable increase in numbers.

There are good examples from other countries. For example, Myanmar redistributed nursing colleges to **decentralise nursing education** from Yangon. It has shown great improvement not just in terms of **redistributing medical colleges**, but also in terms of **rural retention**.

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19. [Not Allies But Something Like It](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Not Allies But Something Like It**” published in “**The Times of India**” on 23rd June 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance– India and US bilateral relations

News – Prime Minister Modi is on an official visit to the USA.

Is India-US relationship a strategic partnership?

The US-India relationship has been described as a strategic partnership since the signing of a civil nuclear deal in 2008.

A strategic partnership involves high levels of defense collaboration, intelligence sharing, multifaceted cooperation, broad-based political support, and stability.

The US-India partnership satisfies all these requirements, with increasing arms sales, defense technology transfers, intelligence sharing and military-to-military cooperation.

A rapidly diversifying portfolio of collaborations includes technology, space, clean energy, and higher education.

The partnership also enjoys bipartisan support in both countries and has not experienced any major crises in recent years. The partnership is more than a transactional relationship, but less than a formal alliance.

Is a formal alliance necessary for India-US security partnership?

Some critics argue that security partnership is limited in scope due to India’s unwillingness to become a formal ally.

But Washington is not pushing for formal alliance status because the partnership already has acquired some alliance-like qualities with foundational defense agreements.

India is also being designated as a **Major Defense Partner**, which grants access to military and dual-use technologies.

The strength of alliances in general may be overstated, as evidenced by the strained relationships between the US and some of its formal allies like Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Israel.

Even during the Trump era when US relations with many of its European and East Asian treaty allies were strained, India-US relations mostly remained stable despite serious trade tensions.

What are the major potential areas of collaboration?

A core agenda point is stepping up efforts to tackle the shared China challenge, which includes expanding both geographic and topical collaborations.

Bilateral cooperation is institutionalized in the Pacific through the Indo-Pacific Quad, and in the Middle East through the I2U2 grouping. A similar formal mechanism for cooperation in the Indian Ocean region is required.

To counter China, it is needed that India’s military capacity should be enhanced and integrate India into global supply chains for critical technologies, reducing reliance on China.

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There may be a focus on partnering to provide financial and production support, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to deliver public goods such as vaccines, clean energy technologies, and infrastructure to countries in the Indo-Pacific region, to reduce their dependence on China.

Overall, the US-India strategic partnership, operating outside the formal alliance system, has been a foreign policy success for both countries.

20. The Digital India Bill should help us fight against gender injustice

Source– The post is based on the article “The Digital India Bill should help us fight against gender injustice” published in “Mint” on 23rd June 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of the vulnerable sections.

Relevance – Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence

News – India’s Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act) is being updated as the Digital India Bill. The article argues that it could provide an internet-age framework of governance to secure the vulnerable.

What is Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV)?

The increased exposure of personal lives on the internet and enhanced user data sharing has led to the emergence of Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV).

It is motivated by the sexual or gender identity of the target. It involves the misuse of technology in order to harm, threaten, coerce, stalk or harass another person.

Perpetrators of tech abuse misuse devices, accounts and software or platforms to control, abuse, track and intimidate victim-survivors.

What is the impact of existing social norms and gender digital divide on Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence?

Existing social norms and widening gender digital divide increases the vulnerability of groups already vulnerable to online violence.

Women’s access to the internet is mostly regulated by male members of the family. This leads to lower reporting rates as survivors fear that reporting may lead to restrictions on internet access.

Independent women who voice their opinion online are seen as challenges to the social structure and thus more vulnerable to violence. This makes them indulge in self-censorship.

What is the need for the Digital India bill?

India’s present legal frameworks are not equipped to tackle internet-based harms.

The Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, were enacted to address physical harms, but they are also being applied in the online space.

The Information Technology Act, 2000, was promulgated in the early days of the internet and as such unable to deal with recent nature, forms and volume of online violence.

None of these laws specifically addresses the issue of gender violence in tech space. Moreover, in our legal system, physical harm is taken more seriously.

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What are the concerns regarding underage users?

There are concerns about their safety and privacy. Countries like the US have undertaken legislative interventions to ensure accountability from internet companies towards underage users.

The Digital India bill must also incorporate similar approaches to safeguard the safety and privacy.

Technology space is continuously evolving. A coherent and concerted action with clear responsibility of each stakeholder can help in creating a victim-centered mechanism.

21. [Artemis Accords: In a new space](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Artemis Accords: In a new space**” published in the **Indian Express** on **24th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations.

Relevance: About the significance of Artemis Mission and associated challenges.

News: Recently, India signed the Artemis Accord. It demonstrates India’s commitment to following best practices in space exploration.

About Artemis Mission

Read Here: [Explained: The significance of NASA’s Artemis mission, the beginning of a new age of human exploration of the Moon](#)

What are the implications of the Artemis Accord for US-India relations?

By signing the accord, India has aligned itself with the US-led space exploration program, which currently excludes two major space explorers – Russia and China.

Further, the agreement is important considering the US-India relationship in the 1980s and 1990s, when the US hindered India’s access to crucial space technology.

It also pressured Russia to retract its commitment to supply cryogenic technology, setting back India’s space program for nearly three decades.

Now, in the joint statements, the US has promised to address export controls and facilitate technology transfer. **This indicates a shift in the US stance towards India and a willingness to collaborate on space technology.**

What is the significance of the Accord for India?

India’s space plans like human missions, moon landings, planetary explorations, setting up a space station, has already been done by countries like the US, Russia or China.

While achieving these missions independently provide expertise, **there are also concerns of staying behind the other countries in such missions.**

Moreover, India’s delay in sending manned missions or landing a satellite on the moon is not due to a lack of capacity or expertise but rather the technology denial regime of earlier years.

Therefore, **joining the US-led alliance is an attempt by India to collaborate on the next generation of space technologies while simultaneously pursuing its own space plans.**

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What are the challenges with India signing the Artemis Accord?

Russia has been India's most trusted partner both in the space and defence sectors. Recently, Russia also offered its facilities to train Indian astronauts for the Gaganyaan mission.

Therefore, **India joining a US-led alliance that promotes the interest of the US is not likely to be seen very favourably by Russia.**

Hence, India will have to strike a careful and delicate balance that it has been doing in the energy sector ever since the war in Ukraine.

22. [Bridging the gap – Efforts to reduce gender disparities must continue in earnest](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Bridging the gap – Efforts to reduce gender disparities must continue in earnest**" published in **The Hindu** on **24th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues Related with Women

Relevance: About the Gender Gap Report, 2023 and reducing gender disparities.

News: India has seen a rise in its ranking in the annual Gender Gap Report, 2023.

What are the key findings of the Gender Gap Report, 2023?

Read Here: [India climbs eight places to 127 in global gender index: WEF report](#)

What concerns lie with India in reducing gender disparities?

Despite the improvement in ranking, there is still more that can be done by India.

For instance, India still has room for progress in the four key areas of the report: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

Further, despite India's improvement in female political empowerment with the representation of women of over 40% in local governance, **women still represent only 15.1% of parliamentarians.**

Therefore, Parliament should take efforts in reducing the parity by acting on the long-pending **Women's Reservation Bill**, introduced in 1996. The bill proposes to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women.

Moreover, even though improvement in sex ratio at birth has closed the gender parity, **concerns still lie in India's performance in health and survival.**

What measures can be taken by India for reducing gender disparities?

India must ensure equal access to education for girls, from school to college along with providing opportunities for paid work.

Moreover, offering girls education that guarantees job opportunities can enhance overall development indicators, including nutrition. It can also break the cycle of early marriage and its negative impact on maternal and child health.

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23. Squaring the circle at the India-Egypt summit

Source– The post is based on the article “A doorway to an entrepreneurial university” published in “The Hindu” on 24th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- India and Egypt bilateral relationship

News– Prime Minister Narendra Modi is visiting Egypt (June 24-25, 2023).

What is the status of the bilateral relationship between India and Egypt?

Historical and civilisational connect– Historically, India-Egypt ties are perhaps the **oldest civilisational link**. In 2750 BCE, the **Pharaoh Sahure** sent ships to peninsular India.

By the middle of the second millennium BCE, **Egyptian mummies** were wrapped in muslin dyed with indigo, both from India.

Past centuries of contacts produced plenty of goodwill and verbal shibboleths. Both countries advocated for decolonisation and favoured non-alignment.

Trade and investment– India’s trade with Egypt stood at **\$6,061 million in 2022-23**. It has declined by 17% over the previous year. Nearly a third of it was petroleum related.

India was Egypt’s **sixth largest trading partner**, while Egypt was **India’s 38th**. **Indian investments** in Egypt were spread over 50 projects **totalling \$3.15 billion**. Egypt has invested only **\$37 million in India**.

Bilateral institutional mechanisms– India has a **Joint Commission, Foreign Office Consultations and at least nine joint working groups**.

Its **Defence and External Affairs Ministers** visited Egypt during the past year. It had a **bilateral summit** less than five months ago when the Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, visited India.

What are the opportunities that can be leveraged for improving bilateral relationships?

Egypt is a large country having a **population of 105 million and an economy (\$378 billion)**. It is **politically stable, and its socio-economic conditions** are quite like India.

Egypt’s **largest imports** are refined petroleum, wheat, cars, corn and pharmaceuticals. India has the potential to supply all these.

The Egyptian government has an **ambitious infrastructure development agenda**, with 49 mega projects including the construction of a New Cairo (\$58 billion), and a \$23 billion high-speed rail network.

During 2015-19, Egypt was the world’s **third-largest arms importer**.

What are the challenges in the India and Egypt bilateral relationship?

The Egyptian economy is in a crisis. The huge **financial commitments** have coincided with a **static economy, pandemic, global slowdown and the Ukraine conflict**. **Tourism** has dropped and imports such as cereals have become costly.

Annual inflation is above 30% and the currency has lost more than half its value since February 2022. **Foreign exchange scarcity** has forced the deferral of payments for such essentials as wheat.

The Gulf Arab states initially supported the Egyptian economy with nearly \$30 billion. But, they have been lately reluctant due to various **governance issues in Egypt**.

Egypt’s foreign debt is over **\$163 billion (43% of the GDP)** and its **net foreign assets** are minus \$24.1 billion.

General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. [Steering sustainable trade – India needs to push manufacturing exports](#)

[Transmitting efficiency – New RE projects could address a major weakness](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Transmitting efficiency – New RE projects could address a major weakness**” published in **Business Standard** on 19th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment – Renewable Energy

Relevance: About NCT’s transmission project and challenges associated with it.

News: The National Committee on Transmission (NCT) has recently approved six transmission projects. It is an important step toward overcoming hurdles for renewable power projects in India.

About NCT’s transmission project

The project **will connect green-energy installations and contribute to the goal of transmitting 500 GW of energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.**

The NCT’s approval is part of a plan to transmit 500 GW of energy based on non-fossil fuels by 2030, connecting solar parks and wind-power plants to the national grid.

Under the plan, the focus is on attracting private sector participation through “traffic-based competitive bidding” (**TBCB**) for these projects.

The transmission projects will connect renewable-energy zones (REZs) in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra, as well as hydroelectric power projects in Himachal Pradesh.

Note: *Currently, renewable energy (RE) accounts for only 12% of the country’s power generation, with coal remaining the dominant source.*

What are the challenges with Renewable Energy projects?

RE power generation, unlike fossil fuel-based generation, **is based on various factors. For example**, solar power depends on factors like sunrise, sunset, and cloud cover, while wind power relies on wind speed.

This variable nature of RE power makes it difficult to integrate it with the transmission of power produced by conventional sources.

Since the capacity utilization of the transmission system varies between 20 percent and 30 percent, **there are questions about its economic viability.**

Another concern which arises is regarding the effectiveness of the traffic-based competitive bidding (**TBCB**) process.

While competitive bidding is generally considered a better approach, recent experiences have shown that the chasing of the lowest power tariffs by bidders does not always result in efficient or viable projects.

For instance, in the solar power sector, competition in project bidding drove prices down to a level where power purchasers backed out of purchasing contracts with RE power generators, hoping for even lower prices in subsequent bids.

It is therefore crucial that the **National Committee on Transmissions’ (NCT) latest plan** avoids this issue.

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2. [On climate change, wealthy nations must show the way](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “On climate change, wealthy nations must show the way” published in “The Indian Express” on 19th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment – Climate Change

News- The article explains the need for urgent action on climate change in current times.

Why is action on climate change urgently needed in present times?

Climate change is creating **variability in our weather systems**. Floods, droughts, extreme rains and subsequent crop damage and health impacts are big challenges for the planet.

The [WMO’s recent report on global temperatures](#) touching 1.5 degrees Celsius is a warning about a climate emergency.

As per **IPCC’s 2023 Climate Change Synthesis Report**, governments are just not doing enough to tackle the crisis.

As per this report, the current pace of climate actions will lead to a rise of **global average temperature** by 2.7 degrees Celsius over **pre-industrial levels** by 2100. All the **international net-zero targets** together would still warm the planet by 2.2 degrees Celsius.

An estimated two million people lost their lives between 1970 and 2019 to extreme weather and the economic loss hovers around \$6.5 trillion.

Many believe that **climate impacts** in 2100 will not be severe, and the **current adaptation measures** will be adequate. But Covid-19 has revealed the **under-preparedness** of most countries. Climate change is likely to pose a much more severe challenge.

What is the importance of rich countries in tackling climate change?

A **mere 10% of the world’s richest countries** emit **50% of the greenhouse gases**, while the poorest account for 12%. Delaying climate action to 2030 is likely to push temperatures beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius.

If the major economies of the world want to lead, they will have to do so by making a **long-term commitment** to reducing emissions.

The quantum of **climate finance** has grown only slightly over the past decade, reaching about **\$ 579 billion in 2017-18**. This is about **10 times less** than the **estimated \$ 6.3 trillion** needed every year **by 2030** to stay aligned with the **Paris Agreement**.

Why is current timing suitable for climate related actions?

The solutions that exist for climate change can be scaled up faster with **political will**. Solar is now the **cheapest source of power** in the major economies. A new solar plant is three times cheaper than its equivalent in coal.

In 2022, **90% of the world’s power sector growth** came from renewables. Twenty-four nations have reported a drop in emissions by expanding their **renewables portfolio**.

The switch to clean energy need not spell doom for the **oil and gas sector**. Professionals can migrate to renewables with **expertise in energy technology and finance**.

By investing their subsidies in **de-centralised solar, wind, geothermal and tidal power**, the corporations could make themselves the primary energy provider for the developing world.

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3. [A reserve currency differs from one that payments are settled in](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “A reserve currency differs from one that payments are settled in” published in the “mint” on 19th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Money and Currency

Relevance- Issues related to external account

News- There has been a lot of discussions recently on the international usage of the US dollar as a reserve currency.

What is a reserve currency?

It is the currency held by countries as **foreign exchange reserves**. These are required to meet the gap between a country’s **international payments and receipts**. It serves as a **buffer to meet any contingency**.

Such reserves can be held in the form of **gold or any foreign currency** that can be **freely used or fully convertible currency**.

What are its characteristics?

It should not be subject to any controls by the country that issues it. USD as a **reserve currency** is based on its **credibility**.

The second requirement for a reserve currency is that there should be **sufficient availability** of that currency to be held as reserves.

Countries should be prepared to expand their currency in amounts sufficient to be held by other countries as a reserve asset. It means running **current account deficits on a sustained basis**. This is known as the **Triffin’s paradox**.

A reserve currency should be available for investment in **liquid form**. Ensuring liquidity in a currency requires well developed **debt and equity markets** in that currency.

What is the historical experience associated with reserve currency?

Historically, gold has been used as a **reserve currency**. Over time, the supply of gold was not enough to meet the growing needs of trade and investment.

This saw the emergence of **reserve currencies**. Currencies of **dominant imperialist countries** like the UK were accepted for international payments.

Initially, the **UK’s pound sterling** was the **currency of choice**. It could always be converted to gold by the Bank of England. It lost its **reserve currency status** as it abandoned the **gold standard** during the Great Depression and became bankrupt following World War II.

As the US began to **dominate the global economy**, it became the **preferred reserve currency**. The trend ended in 1971 and the US abandoned the **gold exchange standard**.

The **freely floating exchange rate system** emerged after it. Countries declared the **exchange rate system of their choice** and their **currency of intervention**. Most countries picked the USD for it. The system has broadly stayed the same since then.

One major change was the emergence of the **euro as a single currency** for countries in the Eurozone.

The **currency composition of allocated reserves** in 2022 as compiled by the IMF shows that **58% of reserves are held in USD and 19% in euro**.

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Do recent global events following US sanctions threaten the use of the USD as a reserve currency?

Countries today are going **alternate currency and even payment arrangements** for their global transactions.

China allowed **limited convertibility** by letting **non-residents hold renminbi accounts** for trade payments.

In 2015, it introduced the **Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS)**, backed by the People's Bank of China.

It offers **clearing and settlement services** for its participants in cross-border renminbi payments and trade. But it does not mean that the Chinese currency can become a **reserve currency**, unless it becomes **fully convertible**.

In 2022, the RBI introduced an additional arrangement for **invoicing, payment and settlement** of exports/imports in Indian rupees through **Special Rupee Vostro Accounts**.

It allows increased invoicing of trade in INR without **multilateral settlement**. But, they are not very different from India's bilateral **trade and payment arrangements** with Russia.

Geo-political considerations and the **covid-19 experience of supply chain disruptions** also forced countries to enter trading blocs and set up their **own payment arrangements**.

The role played by a reserve asset, however, cannot be replaced or minimised by these **payment arrangements**.

A **national currency** serving as a reserve currency with key characteristics of **convertibility, usability and availability** will continue to be needed. The role of the USD will continue to be important.

4. [Responsibility and the complexities of climate leadership](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "Responsibility and the complexities of climate leadership" published in "The Hindu" on 19th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issues related to climate change

News- Over the last few weeks, there has been an increasingly vocal campaign to unseat the President-Designate of COP28, Minister Sultan Al Jaber of the host nation, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

What are the actions needed by the global community for addressing the challenges presented by climate change?

For a clean energy future for the planet, there is a need for **united actions**. It is important to **avoid division**. All fellow parties must be engaged at COP28 and elsewhere.

Many of our nations are also crippled by **unsustainable debts**. Some amount of debt is becoming unplayable due to climate damages.

There is a need for a **collective approach** which recognises the **debt problem** and the barrier it creates for **clean energy investment and climate adaptation**.

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Sovereign wealth funds and multilateral development banks could assist in **de-risking restructured debts** and **insuring re-issued climate bonds**.

Thus, finance continues to be central to the COP outcome. The **Loss and Damage fund** must be utilised properly.

Fossil fuel-dependent economies are critical to these efforts. They can demonstrate their commitment by making subscriptions to support funding for climate damages in the most vulnerable countries.

COP28 may be an opportunity to engage the fossil fuels industry to make some **significant and quantifiable commitments** to **emissions cuts and climate action** in general.

5. [CoWIN leaks: Where's government's due diligence?](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “CoWIN leaks: Where's government's due diligence?” published in “The Indian Express” on 19th June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Awareness in the field of IT, computers. GS2- E-governance

Relevance- Issues related to privacy and security in digitalisation

News- The recent media reports about the CoWin data leak are no doubt disconcerting.

What is the general response of authorities to data-related privacy and security concerns?

They dismiss it by saying that our phone or Aadhaar numbers may already be there with hundreds of entities anyway.

Keepers of these systems argue that the **security and privacy safeguards** deployed are foolproof because they use “**state-of-the-art best practices**”.

What should be standard discourse on security and privacy related concerns?

Security specifications should start with a **well-articulated threat model**. It should tell about **security risks and the capabilities** of a hypothetical adversary.

For large **public service applications**, it is assumed that the adversary can corrupt **all insiders** including system administrators, all custody chains, and all hardware and software.

The system designers are required to either argue for security in some **well-established and standard framework** against such a threat model.

Trusting the **integrity of software or hardware** is usually avoided because such correctness is often difficult to establish.

Why does the policy response on privacy require even more due diligence?

Leakage of **sensitive personal information** from phones, and Aadhaar makes one vulnerable to **direct harms like fraud, identity theft, or illegal surveillance**. There can be **indirect harm** resulting from **unknown entities** using personal data in **unknown ways**.

For example, such data may be used illegally for **profiling voters and influencing them**. This is problematic because individuals are often less careful about these **indirect harms**.

What is the way forward to prevent the privacy breach in digitalisation?

It requires standards to ensure that data is only **collected for specific purposes**. Its security, particularly against **insider attacks**, is a necessary condition.

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There is a need for **legal standards** to ensure collection of data for **specific purposes** and **access control regulation** to prevent building **parallel copies of sensitive databases**.

Any digitalisation involves some privacy risks at the **interface of the digital and the human**. It needs to be **precisely modelled**.

The interface is a crucial component of the **digitalisation use cases**. It defines how various users, including administrators and operators, interact with digital systems.

What is the harm associated with failure to do the required due diligence of privacy risk assessment?

It results in violations of **data collection for specific purposes**. It is evident from the **imprecise definition** in the Aadhaar Act and the **indiscriminate use** of the “Aadhaar card” in all services. Some of these are backed by laws and some are not.

The other harms that often arise due to inadequate modelling are in **digitalisation of welfare delivery** such as sale of PDS ration or MNREGA payments.

It may result in **exclusions and denial of services, hardships, and increased transactional costs** for the beneficiaries.

6. [Greenwashed – Aravalis to Goa, rules are being tweaked to allow ecologically dangerous projects and mining](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Greenwashed – Aravalis to Goa, rules are being tweaked to allow ecologically dangerous projects and mining**” published in **The Times of India** on **19th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation.

Relevance: About protecting Indian hill ranges.

News: A recent study found that India might lose 22% of Aravallis, India’s oldest mountain range, in just 40 years, from 2019 to 2059.

What are the findings of the study on Aravali hillocks?

Read here: [100s of Aravali hillocks flattened, sandstorms reaching Delhi-NCR: Study](#)

Aravalis acts as a natural boundary to the Thar Desert and is a natural water recharge facility. But, a flattening Aravali will speed up the desertification of the entire area.

What are the causes for flattening Aravalis?

These include **a)** Indiscriminate mining, **b)** Environmental laws are routinely diluted by a slew of exemptions, lacunae and reconversions from forest to non-forest land, **c)** Intrusions from developers, urban city departments and state governments into protected eco-zones, and **d)** Allocation of Aravali lands for housing projects of the government.

Why the issue is not persistent in Aravalis alone?

These are common causes. Forests, lakes and fields from Uttarakhand to Rajasthan, Haryana to Goa and the North East are being depleted by developers to build everything from yoga resorts to film studios.

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For example, the recent Goa government regulation freed up 6 crore square metres of Goa's eco-sensitive zone land for sale. In Uttarakhand, policies were altered and rules amended to make mining easier.

The focus on infrastructure development by depleting eco-sensitive zones is myopic. Deforestation and melting glaciers have made hill states vulnerable to mudslides and landslides. So, irreversible damage to ecology must stop as requested by the Supreme Court.

When the government can ban 10 year old diesel cars to protect the environment, then it can do much more to protect a hill range and a seaside ecological zone.

7. Indian Dollar Transfers That Beat Some GOI Welfare Spends

Source– The post is based on the article “**Indian Dollar Transfers That Beat Some GOI Welfare Spends**” published in **The Times of India** on **20th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Money and Banking

News- The article emphasis the importance of reducing the cost of remittances.

What is the news related to?

India crossed a milestone of achieving **remittances inflow of more than \$100 billion**. India stands **first globally** in remittances receipts with a **long lead over Mexico and China**.

Another remarkable achievement is reducing **the cost of receiving these remittances**.

As per the World Bank, India has reduced the simple average cost of receiving remittances in the last 10 years from around **9% to 4.65% for a typical \$200 transaction**. Which is cheaper than the global average of **6.30%**.

What are the benefits of reducing costs?

Firstly, Cost saving = Higher spending power

Secondly, it reduce the **current account deficit** and being less volatile, provide stability to inflow of forex from abroad, and more importantly, remittances provide **financial lifeline** to families and relatives back home.

Thirdly, remittances play a significant role in **poverty reduction** and improving health and educational outcomes of the recipient households.

What are the challenges in reducing costs?

Global analysis shows that **transaction fees** are the prime contributor to the overall cost. It is typically higher, where the sender and the receiver are not able to access the formal financial system.

The costs are more where **the services of an agent are used** for collection or distribution of remittances.

Studies have pointed out that the frictions associated with **verification, regulatory compliances, data exchange, non-interoperable tech platforms**, and long transaction chains may cause the transaction costs to increase.

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How is India overcoming these challenges?

PM **Jan Dhan Yojana** and pervasive use of **direct benefit transfer** under government programmes have been transformative in intensifying financial inclusion.

Zero cost, safe and efficient money transfer through digital public infrastructure in the form of **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is deepening the adoption of mobile mode for transactions.

Interoperable linkages like **UPI-PayNow achieved by RBI and Monetary Authority of Singapore** will enable users of each of the two fast payment systems to make instant, low-cost fund transfers on a reciprocal basis.

With the **emergence of 2,000-plus startups and 20-plus unicorns** in fintech in India in the last few years, the vibrant fintech ecosystem lays the foundation for innovative solutions and healthy competition.

What is the way forward?

Active **support of other countries** is critical to enable ease of validation, compliance and transmission.

India has been taking up this matter in **various forums like G20, WTO** and with its partners in free trade agreements.

Active pursuit of these strategies has delivered promising results till now and the future looks India's experience and strategies surely provide a pathway forward.

8. [The time for an honest and open dialogue on climate is right now](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**The time for an honest and open dialogue on climate is right now**" published in **Live Mint** on **20th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Climate Change, Energy

Relevance: concerns with Renewable Energies

News: Governments consider climate change as a serious challenge, but they tend to come up with normal solutions for fixing it rather than looking at the multifaceted angle.

What kind of solution is provided for climate change?

It is always thought that climate change can be fixed cheaply with solar and wind energy. This restricted thought fails to capture the complexity of the climate challenge and hinders progress in addressing its multifaceted challenges.

Therefore, **it is important to consider the costs and feasibility of proposed solutions**, weighing both the costs of climate change and costs of climate policy.

What are the different factors that need to be considered in tackling climate change?

It is not only climate change but **population dynamics, age distribution, income levels, technological advancements, regulation and governance** all play a role in shaping the supply and demand of economic goods and services.

As per a UN report, for most economic sectors, the impact of climate change will be small relative to the impacts of other drivers.

Moreover, many countries believe solar and wind power alone can solve their energy challenges.

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However, while solar and wind can contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, assessing their limitations and potential drawbacks is crucial.

What are the limitations of solar and wind energy?

Dependence on Geographical Factors: The effectiveness of renewable energy sources depends on geographical factors and available resources.

These sources require significant upfront investments, and their intermittent nature raises concerns about grid reliability and energy storage.

Employment Issues: Transitioning entirely to solar and wind power presents engineering challenges and may have adverse effects on industries reliant on fossil fuels, potentially leading to job losses and social disruptions.

Environmental Damage: The mining and processing of critical minerals and rare earths for renewable technologies can cause significant environmental damage and impact communities, traditions, and cultures.

Therefore, **the cost of implementing renewable energy infrastructure and the potential impact on energy prices should be carefully evaluated**, especially for low-income households and industries sensitive to energy costs.

Limited Battery Storage Capacity: The battery storage capacity for solar and wind energy storage is limited to a few minutes. This highlights the need for significant investments in battery technologies.

Must Read: [The difficulty with renewables](#)

What can be the way ahead?

First, to effectively address climate change, it is important to prioritize innovation and technological advancements rather than relying solely on government regulations and subsidies.

Second, investing in research and development of clean energy technologies, including nuclear energy and advanced carbon capture and storage can play a crucial role in tackling climate challenges.

Third, there is a need to acknowledge the opportunity costs and trade-offs associated with climate choices because solely relying on market mechanisms for emissions mitigation may not be sufficient.

Fourth, exploring complementary energy sources, such as **hydroelectric or low-carbon traditional sources**, can help bridge the gap between intermittent supply and consistent demand.

Fifth, it is also necessary to acknowledge that climate change is not the only problem and there is a need for broadening our perspective

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9. On defaulters, RBI prioritises public interest

Source– The post is based on the article “**On defaulters, RBI prioritises public interest**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **20th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

Relevance- Issues related to banking system

News- On June 8, the Reserve Bank of India set out a framework for bank settlements with defaulters.

Why should banks settle with defaulters?

When there is a default, the primary objective of a bank is to recover as much of the loan as possible. **Various options** might be available to the bank.

The bank decides the best strategy based purely on **commercial judgement**.

Why is it wrong to think that the RBI has permitted something unusual?

One-time settlements are part and parcel of the business of banking. The RBI has simply given a **formal regulatory structure** to a **standard banking practice**.

Some of these settlements can indeed be with **wilful and fraudulent defaulters**. When trying to recover a loan, a bank should not make any distinction between **wilful, and fraudulent default**. It is up to the bank to decide whether a settlement is a **better and quicker option**. The sole motivation behind such a decision should be to **maximise recovery**.

The RBI circular makes it clear that banks can file cases against **fraudulent or wilful defaulters**.

As per circular, banks will undertake settlements “without **prejudice to the criminal proceeding** underway against such debtors”. In other words, the circular does not **condone any crime**.

What are some valid concerns raised by this circular?

Government control over public sector banks– The **settlement process** might be misused to favour **politically connected defaulters** at the cost of the banks’ commercial interests. It is the responsibility of RBI to allow **commercially prudent decisions** and prevent **politically motivated** ones.

There is ample evidence that private sector banks have been settling with wilful defaulters. So, questions arise about the **need for this circular**.

The answer possibly lies in the fact that two-thirds of the Indian banking system is owned by the government. The RBI circular gives these banks **regulatory cover for settlement-related decisions**.

Therefore, the circular merely **levels the playing field**. But the need for such a circular underscores the **distortions** that the Indian banking system suffers from **government ownership of banks**.

Regulatory governance– A year ago, the RBI recommended that the RBI place all draft instructions on its website for **stakeholder comments**. Exceptions should be made only in special circumstances.

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There do not appear to have been any **special circumstances** surrounding the RBI circular related to settlement. There were no issues related to **financial stability, or fiduciary duty, or confidentiality**.

At the same time, the circular is of **great public interest** since it applies to entities against whom criminal proceedings are underway.

Hence, the **draft circular** should have been placed on the RBI's website for **public consultation** along with a **discussion paper** clearly **explaining its rationale**.

10. [Safety first – India's regulators must ensure quality and safety of drugs](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Safety first – India's regulators must ensure quality and safety of drugs**" published in **The Hindu** on **20th June 2023**

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

Relevance: About issues with Indian-made drugs.

News: Two patients have recently died after being given [Indian-made anaesthetic drugs in Sri Lanka](#). This has raised questions about imported Indian drugs.

What are the recent issues highlighted in Indian-made drugs?

-A few months ago, the United States found a highly drug-resistant bacteria in Indian-made drugs.

-Last year, the World Health Organization (WHO) linked the [deaths of at least 70 children in the Gambia](#) from acute kidney injury, to Indian-made cough syrups. Deadly chemicals such as diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol were used as a cheaper alternative for propylene glycol. A detailed causality assessment by the Gambia and independent investigations found a link between the deaths and the toxic chemicals.

Similarly, last year, [Uzbekistan claimed that children died](#) after consuming India-made cough syrup.

Note: Diethylene glycol-contaminated drugs have led to at least five incidents of poisoning in Chennai, Mumbai, Bihar, Gurugram and Jammu between 1972 and 2020.

-Earlier this year, WHO flagged the contaminated drugs found in the Marshall Islands and Micronesia due to Indian-made cough syrup.

Must read: [Issues with the drug regulatory system in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done?

The Indian drug regulator has so far failed to institute measures to make sure drugs produced in India for export and domestic use are safe. To protect India as a pharmacy of the global south, the regulator should act as a watchdog to ensure drug safety, and not as a facilitator for the pharma industry.

Read more: [INDIAN PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR CHALLENGES AND REFORMS](#)

11. [Record-breaking temperatures: In the hot seat](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Record-breaking temperatures: In the hot seat**” published in the **Indian Express** on **20th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation.

Relevance: About 1.5 degree Celsius mark.

News: Earlier, the World Meteorological Organisation warned that temperatures in at least one of the next four years would be higher than the pre-industrial era average by 1.5 degree Celsius. Now, the EU’s Earth Observation Arm, Copernicus, has reported that this threshold was breached in the first week of June. This is the first time that global mean temperatures have exceeded the 1.5 degree Celsius figure during a summer month.

What is the Copernicus programme?

Read here: [Copernicus programme](#)

What will be the impact of breaching the 1.5 degree Celsius mark?

The Paris Agreement refers to global mean temperatures over a 20- or 30-year period. But crossing the 1.5-degree mark frequently will make the cumulative effect of these increases a serious issue. For instance,

-A long-term breach of the 1.5 degree threshold could **aggravate climate impacts**, including heatwaves, floods and droughts.

-Living with such weather vagaries would **require paradigm shifts**, especially in the areas such as agriculture, urban planning, and disaster warning and mitigation systems,

What are the challenges in mitigation and adaptation financing at present?

Inadequate finances: The last IPCC report underlined, “finances for adapting to climate change have been particularly low”. The UNEP estimates that \$340 billion will be needed every year for climate adaptation, but less than \$30 billion gets allocated for the purpose.

Improper method of financing: An OECD assessment shows that 70% of public climate finance is provided through loans where the funder expects a financial return.

Investments provide no immediate return: Interventions such as disaster warning systems or building flood defences do not generate immediate revenue.

Disproportionate impacts: For instance, Pakistan contributes barely 1% of the world’s GHG emissions, but last year’s floods alone cost more than \$30 billion for them.

Overall, the current financing structure does not address the challenges of a large majority of climate-vulnerable countries, they are also amongst the most resource-strapped.

Read more: [On climate change, wealthy nations must show the way](#)

What should be done?

France will soon hold an international summit “aimed at taking stock of the ways and means of increasing financial solidarity with the Global South.” The decisions taken at the meeting are likely to feed into the agenda of COP 28 in Dubai. So, the delegates should consider the recent rise in temperatures seriously.

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12. Rationalising prices – Excess use of urea should be contained

Source: The post is based on the article “**Rationalising prices – Excess use of urea should be contained**” published in the **Business Standard** on **20th June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices.

Relevance: About bringing urea under NBS.

News: Recently, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) has recommended that urea should be brought under the nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) regime, like all other fertilisers.

The Objective is to **a)** foster parity in the prices of fertilisers containing nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), and other plant nutrients, and **b)** ensure fertiliser applications are balanced and need-based.

What is the need for bringing urea under NBS?

Overuse of Urea: The unduly low price of urea, vis-a-vis other fertilisers, has resulted in the overuse of nitrogen and inadequate application of other equally essential nutrients, including some vital micro and secondary plant nutrients. This has consequently adversely affected the soil health and its fertility. For instance, the consumption of urea increased by over 33% since 2010. But other fertilisers registered only marginal gains. The latest estimates reckon the NPK use ratio at 13:5:1, instead of the ideal 4:2:1.

Increased fertiliser requirement: Due to the above issue, higher doses of nutrients are now required to get the same level of crop yields. Continuing this situation would severely impact farming, particularly profitability, which has already been severely eroded.

Increasing fertiliser subsidies: Farm scientists have been demanding the inclusion of urea under NBS ever since the mechanism of NBS was conceptualised in 2010. But successive governments have rejected it as urea pricing is a politically sensitive issue. As a result, fertiliser subsidies have touched a high of nearly Rs, 2.3 trillion in 2022-23.

Failure of other measures: Initiatives like mandatory neem-coating of urea, and the introduction of soil health cards were intended primarily to promote judicious use of plant nutrients. But these measures have failed to produce the desired results.

Considering the above points, rationalising prices seems the best way to restore the nutrient-use balance for the sake of sustainable agriculture.

Must read: [Why urea rules India's farms](#)

Why it is the right time for bringing urea under NBS?

Due to the re-commissioning of three defunct fertiliser plants and the availability of innovative Nano urea, domestic production of urea has begun to increase and the need for imports is waning rapidly. Further, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has eased fertiliser prices. So, the government thus should take this opportunity to rationalise fertiliser prices, as advised by the CACP.

Must read: [The need for a new fertilizer policy in India.](#)

13. [Semiconductor fab: the unfinished agenda](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Semiconductor fab: the unfinished agenda**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **21st June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Industrial Policies

News – The article explains the issues related to the semiconductor industry in India.

What were the earlier attempts by India for semiconductor manufacturing?

The first serious attempt was made in 2007 in the form of a **Special Incentive Package**. But it yielded no response.

The second attempt in the form of **Modified SIP** in 2012 fared better. India came close to having a fab. **Two consortia** were approved by the Cabinet.

The government **offered incentives** amounting to nearly \$5 billion in the form of cash and tax cuts. But finally, both failed to **mobilise resources**.

How has China established itself as a major player in semiconductor manufacturing?

China started late in the **semiconductor fab industry**. But backed by massive government financial support over the last two decades, it acquired hundreds of **loss-making fabs** from around the world and built its fab industry.

China’s chip production has grown rapidly. China has become one of the **major producers** of chips. It has a **strategic stranglehold** on chip-making due to its **market supremacy** in rare earths.

What is the response of western countries to China’s dominance in semiconductor manufacturing?

Over the last year, the U.S. and its Western allies have blocked the transfer of the latest **fab-related technology** to China.

The U.S. enacted the **CHIPS and Science Act** in 2022, with nearly **\$40 billion in subsidies** for semiconductor manufacturing to the country. The European Union sanctioned **€7.4 billion for a new fab** in France.

What are issues involved in semiconductor manufacturing?

Investment in a semiconductor fab is risky. Billions of dollars need to be recovered before the technology becomes obsolete.

There is a need for **substantial production** volumes for **economic viability** that is adequate to meet **global demand**.

Developing an ecosystem for chip manufacturing in a **greenfield location** is a major challenge. Hundreds of chemicals and gases are required for **chip fabrication**.

The advantage of semiconductors having a **small freight-to-price ratio and a zero-custom duty regime** under the Information Technology Agreement, 1996, facilitates production in a single location and global sales.

People need to be trained. **Abundant clean water** should be available. The art of chip-making is important. Despite the best of equipment, poor quality and low yields can make fabs fail.

There are other issues, such as whether to set up a **logic/processor, memory or analog fab**. The most advanced set of technologies is needed to manufacture them.

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A relatively easier option is **Assembly, Testing, Packaging and Marking (ATMP)**. But ATMPs have **little value** in terms of **actual chip-making**.

Semiconductor fabrication represents the ultimate frontier of **human tech advancement**. As per **Moore's law**, the number of transistors in a unit area doubles every 18 months. But the miniaturisation involves higher complexity and costs.

What is the way forward for the success of semiconductor manufacturing in India?

China acquired **loss-making fabs** and then set up its own logic fab. It provides lessons. Acquiring existing fabs has many advantages. They are **reasonably priced, have stabilised technology, and a supply chain ecosystem**. They have an **established product line, and market**.

They will enable India to build the **fab ecosystem** and train human resources. **Much lower subsidies** would be required. Funds saved could be used for **advanced R&D in fab technologies**.

Another strategy could be setting up **ATMPs**. China has over 100 ATMPs.

14. Growth versus equity: A debate that India should've long settled

Source: The post is based on the article "**Growth versus equity: A debate that India should've long settled**" published in **Live Mint** on **21st June 2023**.

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

Relevance: **Impact of higher growth on poverty and on inequality**

News: There has always been debate over growth versus equity, means, how growth of nations impact the well-being of the people. This article explains the impact of growth on poverty and on inequality.

What is the impact of higher growth on poverty?

It is often argued that growth and poverty are in conflict, i.e., when the growth of a nation increases, it increases poverty.

However, in a democratic society, it is difficult to argue that poverty would decrease with high GDP. **For instance**, a higher GDP growth rate, such as 15%, is likely to reduce poverty more significantly than a lower rate, around 10%.

Moreover, the government's measures to redistribute income would also face less resistance with higher growth.

Does higher growth increase inequality?

The relationship between growth and inequality is the inverse. For instance, a 15% growth rate is likely to be accompanied by greater income inequality compared to a 5% rate.

This is because capabilities are unevenly distributed in society, and different sectors of the economy grow at different rates.

For instance, those with the most suitable skills for the faster-growing sectors will experience proportionately higher income growth, while other sectors may find their skills inadequate for the new economic changes.

This structural adjustment occurs irrespective of the country's political system. **Even in China**, income inequality has increased over the past decade.

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The United States has also witnessed the shift of manufacturing production to developing countries, like China and east Asia.

However, **in the US, the market has driven the re-skilling of workers, whereas in developing countries like India, there is a consensus that the state should fund or direct such re-skilling.**

Therefore, the issue of inequality is critical for India, and it is often associated with the challenge of poverty reduction.

What are the challenges associated with India's growth?

There has been a significant structural change in the country's economy after 1991 economic reforms.

Due to these reforms, certain industries, such as small-scale textile and handloom sectors, faced intense competition from abroad, for which they were unprepared.

Despite the government support to the textile industries, **the dominance of textiles as an export item has declined over time.**

Countries like Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are now leading the textile export economy in South and Southeast Asia.

What can be the way ahead for India?

There is a need for **strong government incentives and support for Small Scale Industries (SSIs) and prioritizing re-skilling initiatives.**

Economic growth with government support for re-skilling, rather than picking growth over equity, (or vice versa), is the right political choice.

[15. A national innovation system for pharma](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"A national innovation system for pharma"** published in the **Business Standard** on **21st June 2023**

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

Relevance: About making the Indian pharmaceutical industry a world leader in innovation.

News: Recently a closed-door roundtable on innovation in the pharmaceutical industry was jointly hosted by the Centre for Technology Innovation and Economic Research and the Ananta Centre.

Note: This article is an expansion of [Towards a National Innovation System](#) article.

About the Indian pharmaceutical industry

From an overwhelming dependence on foreign firms and brands 50 years ago, India today has a vibrant and large pharmaceutical sector with highly entrepreneurial Indian players operating alongside multinationals. The industry is the third largest in volume worldwide, with a 10% share. However, in sales, it is the 14th largest in value, with just a 1.5% share.

Read more: [The pharmaceutical industry's self-regulation is a deceptive blocking strategy rather than a means for the industry to police itself.](#)

What should be done to make the Indian pharmaceutical industry a global giant?

TOP FIVE PHARMACEUTICAL FIRM SPENDING ON R&D AND AVERAGES FOR SELECT COUNTRIES (2021)

	Average R & D spending (\$ Mn)	Average sales turnover (\$ Mn)	Average R & D intensity (%)	
USA	10,800	59,600	18	
Switzerland	5,070	24,500	21	
Germany	3,000	25,100	12	
UK	2,950	17,400	17	
Japan	2,490	14,300	17	
China	790	7,030	11	
India	150	1,500	10	
South Korea	130	1,200	11	

Source: Business Standard

Incentivise investment in in-house R&D: India must start with much greater investment in R&D by the industry. The US, Japan, Germany, Switzerland and the UK have giant pharmaceutical companies, each investing billions of dollars in R&D. So India needs a 10-year ambition for leadership, as foreign giants on average spend much more on R&D (\$7 billion) than the turnover of our top five pharmaceutical firms (\$1.5 billion). This can be facilitated by initiatives such as providing full tax credit against income tax for increases in R&D spending, etc.

A regulatory system that supports innovation in firms: Few of the regulatory framework officials do not understand what it takes to discover a new molecule. This forced Indian pharma companies to conduct Phase I trials of new drugs in Australia instead of India.

Note: In Australia, the phase I trials costs 10 times higher, but the process is systematic, transparent and sure.

So, by revamping the regulatory system, India could turn our huge population and low labour cost into a major competitive advantage for drug discovery.

Reorient public research: India invests only around 0.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) in publicly funded R&D, just below the world average of 0.5%. A little over half of national R&D is

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done by the government in its own autonomous laboratories. Defence comes first, then Space, Atomic Energy, CSIR and Agriculture.

Healthcare research comes sixth, at under 6% of government spending on R&D. In the US, healthcare R&D (at 27%) is second only to defence. The same goes for the UK too (at 20%). So, allocating a larger share of government R&D spending to healthcare would be fruitful and spur investment within industry.

Facilitate talent search: Any Indian pharma industry can easily hire fresh graduates from Indian pharmacy courses. But they struggle to get advanced research talent. So, they often set up laboratories in the US and UK to tap into pools of specialised talent.

Almost every other country conducts public research within universities. So, their shift to foreign countries also connects them to well-funded universities that do a lot of healthcare research.

But in India, most of our public research happens in autonomous government laboratories. So, India too should shift public research to our higher education system. Thereby, India would simultaneously train more advanced talent that pharmaceutical firms need.

Follow Chinese approach: Fifteen years ago, the Indian pharmaceutical industry was well ahead of China in innovation. Today it is 10 years behind. This is because of impacts of regulatory changes made in China. These impacts **a)** Made it easier to conduct clinical trials, **b)** Facilitated competition between different local governments incentivised firms to expand R&D facilities in their city, **c)** The Thousand Talents programme attracted experienced technologists, etc.

So, building a broad national purpose will turn the Indian pharmaceutical industry into a world leader in innovation.

Read more: [INDIAN PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR CHALLENGES AND REFORMS](#)

[16. Dead Wrong – Telangana charging the deceased with UAPA brings to life how the most severe laws are casually misused by govts](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Dead Wrong – Telangana charging the deceased with UAPA brings to life how the most severe laws are casually misused by govts**” published in **The Times of India** on **21st June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Security Issues.

Relevance: About misuse of stricter laws.

News: In Telangana, police charged the two dead people for two years under the anti-terror law, [Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Act, 1967](#). This is a classic example of the casual misuse of one of India’s most stringent laws.

About the status of UAPA cases

Analysis of NCRB data by various experts shows the conviction rate of people charged under UAPA is below 3%. Although 97% of those arrested and jailed get acquitted eventually, getting bail is tough. For instance, hardly 16% alone got bail in 2020. Thirteen of 4,690 accused under UAPA between 2018 and 2020 were below 18; 53% were between 18 and 30. The conviction rate for cases is 27%, almost half the convictions in IPC cases.

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At the end of 2021, the highest number of cases pending investigation for over 10 years was in Manipur, with 1,597 of 2,041 such cases.

Read more: [Issue of Bail under UAPA \(Unlawful Activities Prevention Act\) – Explained, Pointwise](#)

About the sedition cases

UAPA, along with the sedition law and a clutch of state laws, gives police sweeping powers to apply severe procedures for offences that are mostly loosely defined. The misuse of the sedition law prompted the Supreme Court to delay its decision until the government reconsiders. However, the [law commission cited national security to seek a stricter sedition law](#). The debates led the new law minister to indulge in “further consultations” on sedition.

Supreme Court changes stand; now mere membership of a banned outfit is a crime under UAPA

SC must not wait indefinitely for the government to reconsider the sedition law. Further, the government should consider the Telangana example as a grave “tendency” to violate rights and reconsider it.

17. Poor productivity – Cotton farmers need genetically modified seeds

Source: The post is based on the article “**Poor productivity – Cotton farmers need genetically modified seeds**” published in the **Business Standard** on **21st June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Awareness in the field of biotechnology.

Relevance: About the need for GM cotton crops.

News: For the past several years, India’s cotton production has been stagnating at 34-36 million bales (one bale is 170 kg).

What is the present state of India’s cotton production?

The cotton sector supports the livelihood of 45-50 million people, including 6 million cotton farmers.

Though India leads the world in cotton acreage, India ranks only 38th in productivity. For example, the average productivity of cotton is only around 500 kg a hectare, which compares poorly with the global average of over 800 kg.

While the old Bt-cotton hybrids, responsible for increasing output, have become outmoded. The new ones to replace them are not forthcoming. The moratorium on testing genetically modified (GM) crops imposed by the government in 2010 is thwarting the development of new Bt-cotton seeds.

Read more: [A fresh beginning – New GM cotton can reverse the yield decline](#)

What is the status of research for other GM cotton crops in India?

BG-2 RRF: It is a second-generation variant of the Bt-cotton seed, developed by the well-known seed company Mahyco. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) has delayed the permission by seeking additional data.

Cry2Ai gene: It is the Bt-cotton strain containing the pink bollworm-resistant, developed by Hyderabad-based Bioseed Research India. State governments are putting up hurdles in the field-

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testing of the new seeds. Three states —Maharashtra, Telangana, and Gujarat — have not even allowed field trials of the new seeds. Haryana, the only state that has agreed to permit testing, is under pressure from the anti-GM lobby.

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

Why does India need GM cotton crops?

-Agronomic means such as expansion in plant density and improvement in input-use efficiency can increase in crop yields to some amount. But these cannot save the crops from diseases and pests, which are turning more virulent.

-None of the present Bt-cotton hybrids is capable of withstanding the onslaught of pink bollworm, which has become the major nemesis of this crop now. Farmers have little option but to spray pesticides repeatedly, with grave environmental implications.

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

What should be done?

The government should effectively counter the disinformation being spread by some anti-GM activists about gene-altered crops. The state governments need to appreciate the merits of modern technology and facilitate the advent of new strains to sustain the cotton revolution.

18. The aviation industry: Flight to the future

Source: The post is based on the article “**The aviation industry: Flight to the future**” published in the **Indian Express** on **21st June 2023**

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

Relevance: About recent aircraft acquisition deals.

News: India’s civil aviation sector witnessed two back-to-back jumbo aircraft acquisition deals over a span of four months. One is IndiGo’s historic 500 aircraft deal and the other is Air India’s combined purchase of 470 aircraft.

What are the significances of aircraft acquisition deals?

a) The two deals cumulatively ensure that India is now ensconced in second place in the list of carriers having the largest aircraft order book, behind the US, **b)** The deals reflects the optimism about the potential of India’s aviation market. In May, India’s domestic passenger traffic numbers touch a record 13.2 million flyers, surpassing the pre-pandemic peaks, and **c)** The deals reaffirm India’s position as the world’s fastest-growing aviation market and the third-biggest market globally in terms of domestic traffic.

Must read: [Indian aviation industry: Potential and challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the challenges highlighted by the aircraft acquisition deals?

With Go First facing issues, SpiceJet financial problems and Jet Airways’ revival taking time, India’s domestic **aviation market is heading in the direction of a duopoly** that has market leader IndiGo and the Tata group airlines.

For instance, IndiGo has a market share (in terms of passengers carried) of over 60%. This new acquisition order ensures a steady supply of aircraft for the carrier till 2035 and equips it to consolidate its position on the leaderboard in India’s booming aviation market.

Must read: [Aviation Sector in India: Status, Opportunities and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should India focus on?

In cumulative terms, Indian carriers have a fleet strength of over 700 aircraft. This is less than half the 1,500 aircraft with American Airlines, the biggest of the four major carriers of the US aviation market have around 1,300 aircraft each. So, India has a long way to go.

India's annual passenger capacity in the six major metropolitan cities is likely to nearly double to 420 million passengers by 2030. The government is also redoubling the efforts to create aviation hubs in India, starting with Delhi. So, the present aircraft acquisition deals are a good sign for the Indian aviation industry.

19. Why EU's carbon levy helps rich countries get richer

Source– The post is based on the article “**Why EU's carbon levy helps rich countries get richer**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **22nd June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issues related to climate change

News– EU has introduced a **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)**.

What is the issue of differentiated responsibility sharing in climate change negotiations?

Historically, the **primary responsibility** for climate change has been with the advanced economies, and their **process of industrialisation**.

The **contribution of the Global South** was negligible. The Kyoto Protocol recognised the “**common but differentiated responsibilities**”.

The **Paris Agreement** required the richer countries to make **financial transfers** to the developing economies. It set a floor of **\$100 billion per year** for these transfers.

What are some facts about CBAM?

This involves imposing tariffs on imports from other countries that use **carbon-intensive methods of production**.

A tariff on the import of these goods by the EU would restore **competitive parity** to the domestically produced goods that are subject to a higher price of carbon.

The CBAM is expected to achieve **three objectives**. **First** is to **reduce the EU's emissions**. **Second** is that the EU should not **lose competitiveness in carbon-intensive goods**. **Third** is to make the targeted countries reduce the **carbon intensity of their exports**.

This mechanism, **starting in 2026**, will cover products such as cement, steel, aluminium, oil refinery, paper, glass, chemicals and electricity generation.

The **countries most affected** will be Russia, [Ukraine](#), Turkey, India and China. Only three of the 12 exporters to the EU have a mechanism for “**pricing carbon**”.

What are issues related to CBAM?

Need for more details– **First**, is related to countries that will be **exempted**.

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Second is related to emissions that will be included in the levying of the import tax. Are **indirect emissions** embodied in inputs like machines to be considered or only **direct emissions**?

Third is related to products that are to be included in CBAM.

International laws– The WTO has promoted **free trade**. The CBAM is a **unilateral move, against the spirit of multilateralism**.

The **problems of measurement** mean that it could be used for protectionism. It targets production processes that the WTO does not approve of.

Revenue collection– The **analytical framework for tackling climate change** is based on putting a **price on carbon emissions**.

Burning of carbon anywhere in the world affects climate change across the world. So, there is a need for a **global price for carbon** to redress this **global “externality”**.

In the absence of a world government, who gets to keep the **tax revenue** is important. In the case of the CBA, it is the EU that will keep the revenue.

Concerns related to the global south– This mechanism also seeks to **penalise “free riders”**. A free rider is one who is not contributing towards fighting climate change, although has the means to do so. The country that fits this definition is the US.

The developing countries did not create the problem and have limited means to pay for a **“clean up”**.

There are **equity concerns** also. It's designed to help rich countries avoid paying for creating the climate problem.

Other issues– There is **some arbitrariness** involved in the coverage of a CBAM. It is not always easy to infer the **process of production** by looking at the final product.

CBAM is targeting the emissions embodied in a **limited number of traded goods**. Its **effect on climate change** is likely to be small.

[20. Why libraries are liberating spaces](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Why libraries are liberating spaces”** published in **“The INdian Express”** on **22nd June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Issues related to development and management of education

News– The article explains the issues related to public libraries in India

What are issues related to public libraries in India?

Under the Indian Constitution, public libraries are a state subject. Nineteen states have passed the Library Legislation Act and five states levy a library cess.

In 2013, the **National Mission on Libraries** came into being under the Ministry of Culture, to revive and modernise public libraries.

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They have utilised most of their budget for creating **digital libraries including the National Digital Library of India**. But it has not made much difference due to **digital inequality** existing in the country.

There is no move by the National Mission on Libraries to bring state public libraries under **one policy** or address the issues of **access to existing libraries**.

There is **wildly conflicting data** on the state of the **Indian public library system**. No reliable data exist for functioning libraries at the national, state and district level.

There is **no standardisation** across public libraries or guidelines for **curriculum, and best practices**.

NGO and citizen-led efforts in some of India's most **under-served, remote and neglected regions** are working on **public libraries**. But there is no concerted effort to help **sustain them**.

What are efforts by the government for a national policy on public libraries?

The most recent **draft national policy** was written in 1986 and it recognised that all public libraries must be free. Though it was never ratified,

Last year, it was reviewed by a **Rajya Sabha standing committee**. The committee recognised that a national policy was needed to convert **state legislations** into an **enforceable tool for reform**. But it dropped the need for **free libraries**.

What is the way forward to improve the conditions of public libraries in India?

There is a small but growing group of library workers from all over India coming together to campaign for a **free library movement**. Everyone from **bookmakers, policy wonks and educators** to the public should join librarians in demanding it.

The need of the hour is a **national library policy** to ensure **free, accessible and excellent libraries for all**.

21. [An ode to start-ups in defence](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**An ode to start-ups in defence – Policy initiatives like IDEX have put the defence industry on the path to self-reliance**" published in **Business Standard** on **22nd June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indigenization of Technology, Defence Technology

Relevance: Atmanirbharta in defence

News: The Indian defence industry is growing. India, from being the world's largest importer of arms and ammunition, is expected to become one of the top five defence exporters before 2030.

What has caused the growth in the Indian defence industry?

PM's call for atmanirbharta in defence has brought unprecedented change to the sector. It is now recognized that genuine defense preparedness is only achievable through self-reliance.

How did atmanirbharta in defence came up?

The desire to become atmanirbharta is not new. It has been the proclaimed goal of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for decades.

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Several high-level committees were set up over the years. **A new Department of Defence Production was instituted in 1962.** Private industry was allowed entry in 2001, but **imported equipment remained dominant.**

However, **between 2018 and 2022, the current government implemented several policy decisions that brought transformation.**

These included the introduction of Innovation for Defence Excellence (iDEX), redefining DefExpo and Aero India as platforms to showcase India's defense industry capabilities, ease-of-doing business reforms, positive indigenization lists, etc.

The PM's call for atmanirbharta received support from the armed forces, public sector units (PSUs), and domestic industry. However, the most significant impact was made by the start-ups under [iDEX](#).

How did iDEX helped in transforming the defence sector?

Innovation by the Startups: iDEX helped in the emergence of startups, which developed indigenous technologies and domestic solutions for the defence forces in India.

This allowed India to get the required products at a cheaper rate domestically than those imported.

The solutions developed by the iDEX start-ups were as good or better than those imported. They excelled in emerging technology areas like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and drones.

For example, QNu Labs developed Quantum Key Distribution over fibre, and achieved distances that were 60 percent higher than the best in class.

Scalability: Scalability was another major benefit of iDEX. Military equipment consists of thousands of sub-systems, which can now be developed simultaneously because of thousands of start-ups responding to these.

Fostering Teamwork: iDEX showcased the power of collaborative teamwork among diverse organizations within the Ministry of Defence.

Representatives from the armed forces, DRDO, PSUs, and the Acquisition Wing worked together, acting as facilitators rather than figuring as bosses.

Other Sectors: iDEX also benefited other sectors in need of an indigenous innovation ecosystem, such as railways and Space.

What can be the way ahead?

The Make in India initiative saw its success in the form of iDEX. However, the true success of iDEX will be realized if it serves as a stepping stone towards a broader vision of "Make in India 2.0".

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22. [Overkill: The Manipur government's decision to extend net shutdowns lacks merit](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Overkill: The Manipur government's decision to extend net shutdowns lacks merit**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd June 2023**

Syllabus: GS 3 – The role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

Relevance: About Internet shutdowns in Manipur.

News: The Manipur High Court granted limited Internet access in designated places in the State after a petition seeking the restoration of net access. This is because, citizens have been unable to access vital services such as e-commerce-related activities, except for those who can get exemptions from the shutdowns with government permission.

The Manipur HC also said that the government is merely using the shutdown as a substitute for enforcing law and order.

About rules governing internet shutdowns and Court intervention

According to Section 5(2) of the Telegraph Act, 1885 and Telegraph Rules, governments can explicitly seek to retain internet bans in case of a public emergency or in the interests of public safety.

The Supreme Court, in Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India (2020), held that an indefinite suspension of Internet services was in violation of the law, as freedom of expression and the freedom to conduct commercial work via the Internet are fundamental rights. It also held that such suspensions should adhere to the “principle of proportionality and must not extend beyond necessary duration”.

Read more: [Internet shutdowns hurt much more than we realize: UN rights office](#)

How to tackle the situation in Manipur?

The situation in Manipur can be tackled effectively by **a)** restoring the confidence of all stakeholders, **b)** engaging with civil society actors in restoring inter-community dialogue, **c)** isolating the extremists and **d)** pursuing a step-by-step approach towards restoring peace and normalcy. So, the government should stop focusing on the Internet shutdown.

Read more: [Internet shutdowns in India: impacts and way forward](#)

23. [Why inflation and WPI is down, but not \(all\) prices](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why inflation and WPI is down, but not (all) prices**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: About the trend of inflation

News: The headline retail inflation rate reached a 25-month low in May and the wholesale price index (WPI) also showed a significant decrease.

What has caused the decline in inflation rates?

The high base effect has helped the easing of headline inflation. However, the inflation rate for certain household items still remains high. A high base effect has also helped in a sharp decline in the **WPI-linked inflation rate**.

According to a data, WPI inflation hit a seven-and-a-half-year low in May, due to the high base effect, lower global commodity prices, low costs of food, fuel, and manufactured items.

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However, previously, the wholesale inflation rate had reached double digits during April-September 2022, and reached 16.63% in May 2022.

Moreover, despite the lowering inflation, some items still show a high inflation rate.

Which items have displayed high inflation rates?

Food and Beverages: In this category, 'cereals and products' have remained in double digits since September 2022, peaking to 15.27% in March 2023. However, the inflation rate for this category decreased to 12.65% in May.

Milk and Products: This category has seen an inflation rate of more than 7% since September 2022, peaking at 9.65% this February.

Spices: The inflation rates have remained persistent for the spices. Over the last one year, except in May 2022, the inflation rate for spices has remained in double digits, peaking to 21.09% in January this year.

Prepared Meals, Snacks and Sweets: These have also witnessed a persistent rate of inflation. Prepared meals, snacks, sweets too have recorded a 6%-plus inflation rate in the last one year.

Non-food items: Among non-food items, the inflation rate for household goods and services has remained above 6% for the last one year.

Education: It has seen inflation above 5% since July 2022.

Personal care and effects: The inflation rate for this category has been rising steadily.

Which items have displayed a low inflation rate?

Meat and Fish: This category has been in the deflationary zone for the last three months.

Oils and Fats: This category has recorded a sharp decline in inflation, remaining in negative territory for the last four months.

Fruits and Vegetables: These have remained in the negative zone for the last seven months on a year-on-year basis. The inflation rate for vegetables was in double digits during April-September 2022, and entered negative territory thereafter.

What kinds of inflation risks lie ahead?

While the headline inflation number is expected to remain below 5% in the near term, **most economists expect the inflation rate to rise marginally** in June 2023.

Further, **the development of El Nino conditions and their influence on the monsoon could affect crop yields, causing food inflation.**

Although food inflation is expected to remain manageable, it is likely to rise on a year-on-year basis in the second half of FY24, due to seasonal factors. Commodities such as milk, sugar, cereals, etc. may also see a rise in prices.

Note: *Weight of different products in CPI – Food and Beverages (54.18%), Cereals and product (12.35%), Milk and products (7.72%), Spices (3.11%), Education (3.46%), Oils and fats (4.21%).*

Note: *The base effect relates to inflation in the corresponding period of the previous year. If the inflation rate was too high in the corresponding period of the previous year, then even a smaller rise in the Price Index will give a low rate of inflation and vice-versa.*

Source: The Indian Express

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24. [The uproar over the new COP28 President](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “The uproar over the new COP28 President” published in “The Hindu” on 23rd June 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issues related to climate change

News- Questions are being raised over the COP28 Presidency of United Arab Emirates (UAE) Industry Minister Sultan Ahmed al-Jaber.

Who is Sultan al-Jaber?

Mr. al-Jaber has been the CEO of the **Abu Dhabi National Oil Company** since 2016. He was appointed as UAE’s Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology in 2020.

Also in 2020, he was for the second time appointed as the **UAE’s special envoy for climate change**.

His team has been accused of attempting to **“greenwash” his image**. It emerged that members of his team had edited Wikipedia pages that talked about his role as CEO of ADNOC.

Why is Sultan al-Jaber’s appointment facing criticism?

There is discontent with the appointment of an **oil executive** to head a summit focussed on **mitigating climate change**.

The decision to name the chief executive of one of the world’s largest fossil-fuel base companies as president of COP28 risks **undermining the negotiations**.

Reducing **carbon emissions** is a necessity in the fight against **climate change**. There is a need to reduce the production and use of fossil fuel resources.

Al-Jaber does not talk about a **concrete plan** to phase out fossil fuels. **ADNOC 2030 strategy** is to build a more profitable upstream, more valuable downstream and more sustainable and economic gas supply.

The appointment is a perfect example of a **conflict of interest**. It is like putting the tobacco industry in charge of ending smoking.

Experts also highlight that it is in the **UAE’s national interest** to continue the production of fossil fuels as the **10th largest oil producer** in the world.

Why has Mr. al-Jaber’s advocacy of carbon capture been criticised?

On climate goals, some world leaders have been pushing for a **phaseout of fossil fuels**. Others insist on oil and gas continuing to play a role in the future, provided their **emissions are curbed**. Mr. al-Jaber belongs to the **latter school of thought**.

Climate campaigners and scientists have expressed caution that technologies proposed so far to **capture fossil fuel emissions** have not been **tested at scale**.

They also argue that such responses do not **hit at the root cause** of the problem and propose **containment** once emissions are released. Such responses could **divert attention and resources** from **effective alternatives** such as renewable energy.

Carbon capture and storage technologies should only be restricted to sectors where cutting emissions is extremely hard, such as the cement industry.

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Mr. al-Jaber has talked about the need to **tackle fossil fuel emissions**. As per him, the goal should be a global system “**free of unabated fossil fuels**”. It is related to **reducing or capturing greenhouse gas emissions**.

As per al-Jaber, his country wants “a **comprehensive, holistic approach to an energy transition** that includes all sources of energy.”

Developing nations like Bangladesh and the Maldives have also said that **fossil fuel-dependent economies** are critical to **climate negotiation and mitigation efforts**. They have a more difficult task in defining their **energy transition strategy**.

25. [PLI schemes are in need of a coherent trade policy](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Our PLI schemes are in need of a coherent trade policy**” published in “**Mint**” on **23rd June 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the need of a trade policy to support PLI schemes.

News: The debate over the PLI schemes is silent on trade policy. It is a critical aspect of manufacturing strategy.

Why is a coherent trade policy important?

A coherent trade policy reduces tariff barriers and incentivizes technology transfers from countries and companies that dominate the production of ICT hardware and semiconductors.

India wants to emulate China, Taiwan and Vietnam by improving domestic infrastructure and logistics with tax breaks and financial incentives for ICT manufacturing. But their liberalized trade policies are not emulated.

India’s trade policy is marked by a tendency to raise tariffs, particularly since 2015, as Aatmanirbhar Bharat gained momentum. Ad hoc tariff hikes are inconsistent with India’s obligations under the ITA-1, as the WTO has recently ruled in a dispute filed by the EU, Japan and Taiwan.

Data shows that India’s tariff barriers have not reduced Indian dependence on foreign suppliers. High tariffs also make high-quality components from foreign suppliers expensive. Therefore, domestic ICT manufacturers are at a disadvantage as they compete on cost with other global players.

Why are companies not tariff-jumping FDI?

The prospect of accessing India’s rapidly-growing demand should have convinced MNCs to set up local manufacturing or assembly operations via tariff-jumping FDI. (Foreign companies invest in a subsidiary in another country to avoid tariff barriers.)

However, studies have shown that for ICT and semiconductor sectors, tariffs may deter foreign manufacturing investment and Global Value Chain integration, bypassing the benefits of tariff-jumping FDI.

India’s integration into ICT and semiconductor Global Value Chains is in progress. To speed up the process, New Delhi must discard its protectionist trade policy. That will help leverage its advantages of a large market, low labour costs and strategic partnerships with the US and others.

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Recent initiatives like the Indian Semiconductor Mission and National Policy on Electronics, 2019, suggest growing policy cohesion on FDI, fiscal incentives and manufacturing infrastructure. Now it is time to revamp our trade policy.

26. [Amid roar over increase in tiger count, murmur for NTCA revamp](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Amid roar over increase in tiger count, murmur for NTCA revamp**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **24th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Conservation.

Relevance: About NTCA Revamp.

News: Indian Forest Service officers in Madhya Pradesh are debating the revamp of the [National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\)](#).

While some officers are in favour of delegating greater powers to those experienced in tiger conservation, others believe NTCA is the best organization of its kind in the world.

What are the arguments for NTCA revamp?

Ensure timely action in emergencies: Delegation of greater powers to the experienced custodians of the forest will take conservation efforts to the next level. Empowering the local custodians will ensure timely action in emergencies.

Placements in NTCA: Transparency in the placement and presence of officers with unparalleled experience in NTCA would guide the NTCA towards more effective strategies.

Coordination: Despite being a nodal agency, NTCA has not done much to develop better coordination between tiger states.

Capacity building: NTCA should also focus on capacity building of people around the tiger reserves. If proper steps are not taken, they might be misled. NTCA can generate funds that can be utilized for their training and skill development.

Budget: The number of tiger reserves has doubled in the last few years, but the budget remains the same.

Read more: [Tiger translocation project: Need and significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the arguments against the NTCA revamp?

A powerful public body: Only NTCA has the power to ensure that any land in India (lying between two Protected Areas) is not used for ecologically unsustainable purposes. NTCA has the power to give binding directions to any person, officer, or authority regarding tiger conservation.

Non-compliance by states: Non-compliance of NTCA’s directions by tiger range states is hazardous for tiger conservation. Government should amend the Wildlife Act for stricter compliance of NTCA directives.

Enough budgets: The government of India has enough budgets. Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) money is also being allotted.

Must read: [Increasing tiger population in India and government initiatives – Explained, pointwise](#)

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27. [Our lives depend on plants — we must have plant literacy to understand climate change](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Our lives depend on plants — we must have plant literacy to understand climate change**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **24th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance: About the issues faced by the plant species.

News: Recent research has shown how the construction of different vascular systems allows plants to live in disparate regions of the world. The study also shows how plants evolved as well as how they will respond to future climatic conditions.

What are some key features of plant architecture?

Vascular system: The vascular system is a series of cells arranged similar to pipes. Plants developed this system 400 million years ago to transport water.

There is a strong relationship between the amount of water a plant can extract from soil and transport to its leaves and its productivity which translates to growth in agricultural systems.

Stomata: Microscopic valves called stomata regulate the flow of carbon dioxide into leaves for photosynthesis. However, when the stomata open to allow carbon dioxide in, they also expose the inside of the leaves to dry air. As a result, plants lose approximately 400 water molecules for every CO₂ molecule they take up, with greater water loss in dry environments.

When water is limited, the plant closes its stomata, cutting off the CO₂ it normally takes up from the atmosphere. Plants have been fine-tuning the cells that control water flow in them over millennia.

Read more: [Insects outnumber all species on Earth — some beetle groups are as old as dinosaurs](#)

How anthropogenic conditions are impacting plant species at present?

Plants have evolved over millions of years to cope with all sorts of variability. That includes fluctuations in temperature, humidity, pathogens and pests.

Plants created a range of adaptations for water stress also. For example, they evolved gravitational sensing mechanisms which allow them to know which way to grow deeper for water and nutrients.

But due to climate change and associated droughts, the variability changes much more frequently and plants face challenges in adapting to them.

Read more: [1 million animal and plant species face extinction threat: Study](#)

What should be done to protect the plant species?

As a species, humans are completely dependent on plants for day to day lives. So, to protect them, **a)** There should be a **clear understanding of the physiological tipping points** for plant species to create solutions for climate resilience, particularly in farming, and **b)** The government's around the world should work on **improving plant literacy among the public** –to understand what climate change means for Earth's flora, forests and farming.

28. [The uproar over the new COP28 President](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Credit for India-US bonhomie goes to Xi Jinping**” published in “**The Indian Express**” and the article “**Soft or hard power?**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **24th June 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance– India and US bilateral relationship

News- The article explains the importance of India and US bilateral relationship for Asian geopolitics. It also explains the importance of hard power in strengthening the bilateral relationship.

How is evolving India and US relations important in the context of Asian geopolitics?

This new moment in bilateral relations is important for the **evolution of Asian geopolitics**. The new [India-US defence partnership](#) can ensure that Asia is not vulnerable to **domination by any one power**.

The **India-US defence compact** is not an effort to **contain Beijing**. China is **too large and powerful to contain**.

It is an attempt to build a **multipolar Asia** with **sufficient deterrent capabilities** and ensure respect for the **sovereignty and territorial integrity** of all states in the region.

Both [Delhi](#) and Washington want **productive relations** with China. India’s engagement with China, to restore peace and tranquillity on the disputed border reflects that approach. The US is **re-engaging China** so that current tensions do not escalate into a shooting war.

The outlines of a **more expansive defence cooperation** unveiled by the two leaders shows the **convergence of their geopolitical and geo-economic interests in Asia**.

The US support for the **modernisation of India’s defence industrial base** is part of the effort to strengthen **India’s military capabilities** and enhance its **deterrence against China**.

What were the India-US differences over Asian order during the cold war and efforts to deal with these differences?

This inability of Delhi and Washington to build a **productive relationship** in the past was rooted in a profound disagreement on the preferred geopolitical order in Asia.

The divergence included the **assessment of Soviet Russia and Communist China, Washington’s Cold War alliances, and the US tilt to Pakistan**.

There were occasional moments after the Chinese attack on India, and more recently in the early 2000s, to explore a common agenda for Asia.

The formation of the Quadrilateral Forum in 2007 and the emergence of the Indo-Pacific construct provided a basis for serious India-US strategic collaboration in Asia.

How has China always concerned about the strong bilateral relationship between India and the US?

Chinese concern about **India-US strategic cooperation** was evident in Beijing’s intense opposition to the Bush-[Manmohan Singh](#) **civil nuclear initiative** and its continued blocking of **India’s membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group**.

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China did not have to work too hard to keep Delhi and Washington separate. India's **own reluctance** to develop **strong defence cooperation** with Washington, in the name of "**non-alignment**" helped China.

Keeping distance from the US, or "**strategic autonomy**" was defined as a **first principle of India's foreign policy**. It left China free to build a relationship with the US on its own terms.

Beijing has become the **greatest champion of India's "strategic autonomy"**. The Chinese commentariat praises Delhi's **independent foreign policy**.

What are the push factors behind the increasing closeness between India and the US?

The credit for moving India and the US closer than ever before goes to the **assertive policies of Xi Jinping**.

The **crises of Doklam (2017) and Galwan (2020)** persuaded India to boost its **deterrence against China** as the **principal strategic objective**. This led Delhi to seek **stronger strategic partnerships** with the US and its allies.

Washington too has changed in the interim. In the last two years, Washington has moved away from an **Asia policy** framed around the **bilateral relationship with Beijing**.

The US has revitalised its **traditional alliances** with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Australia, created **new coalitions like the AUKUS**, and **upgraded the Quad forum** to the **summit level**.

Underlying this is a new US strategy to build a **more balanced Asia**. That suits Delhi. It is not seeking an **alliance** with the US but a **partnership** that will elevate **India's capabilities** and help contribute to a **stable Asian architecture**.

How can the logic of hard power explain the bilateral relationship?

It has India's **growing military and economic clout, and the potential of the market**. The aircraft ordered by IndiGo and Air India are only one manifestation of this.

India's is the **world's fifth-largest economy** and likely to become the **third-largest** before too long.

The Indian economy is only **15% of the US' in size**, but its **contribution to world growth is 60%** of the US' because it is growing four times as fast this year.

India's military too matters, especially in the **Indian Ocean**. Here, it can counter **China's expanding navy** aided by the **surveillance and attack capabilities** of a dozen **American Poseidon aircraft and the 31 Sea Guardian drones** being ordered.

India's **defence budget** is the **world's fourth-largest**, and it is the **world's biggest defence importer**.

Many Western companies see a brighter future like General Electric, which, with HAL, will make engines in India for the Tejas, Mark 2. India can therefore afford to be **more assertive in its foreign policy**.

On the other side of the equation, the US economy has comfortably **outpaced the European Union** in the last decade-plus and is now **25% bigger**.

It is uniquely positioned as the **home of the major tech companies**. It is the source of **vital technology and capital**, and with a critical role when negotiating **multilateral issues like trade and climate change**.