



**9 PM**

# **Compilation**

**26<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2023**

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### General Studies - 1

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1. [We need a better grasp of our oceanic see-saws](#)
2. [Express View on RWAs and prejudice: Pettiness of power](#)
3. [Will the Indian Ocean Dipole save the monsoon?"](#)
4. [Between two books, a revelatory social history](#)

### General Studies - 2

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1. [A new regime – India must keep an eye on adverse reactions from new drugs and vaccines](#)
2. [Why Taiwan Strait Matters To India](#)
3. [Ashok Gulati writes on the US and India: Old friends in a changing world](#)
4. [NCERT deletions discourage debate](#)
5. [Transparency in governance](#)
6. [New Delhi's approach to multilateral ties needs clarity](#)
7. [Laying the foundation for a future-ready digital India](#)
8. [Tracing the arc of American 'exception-ism' for India](#)
9. [Spring cleaning – on Regulations on Graduate Medical Education \(GMER\)](#)
10. [The concerns about India-U.S. digital trade](#)
11. [A model for quality and inclusive education](#)
12. [How India's renewed ties with Egypt can help its global standing](#)
13. [PM Modi pushes for Uniform Civil Code: How it can impact different communities](#)
14. [Private, unlimited – Indo-US tech deals expand scope for private sector](#)
15. [Rankings, and the realities of higher education](#)
16. [Manila and New Delhi: A 21st Century Partnership](#)
17. [Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi \(Amendment\) Ordinance, 2023: Manifestly arbitrary, clearly unconstitutional](#)
18. [That Wasn't a Capital Idea](#)
19. [India needs a stronger statistical system for better policymaking](#)
20. [Fiscal federalism needs a look-in by the 16th Finance Commission](#)
21. [India and the US-China chips war](#)
22. [Why women bureaucrats lose out on senior posts](#)
23. [A new chapter in India-Africa ties can be written](#)
24. [That Wasn't A Capital Idea – On Ministers dismissal by Governor](#)
25. [Message from the NIRF rankings](#)
26. [The case for a Uniform Civil Code](#)

### General Studies - 3

---

1. [Climate meet in France: It signals small steps towards improving climate financing architecture](#)
2. [Gains from LLMs for India](#)
3. [Incentivise eco-friendly fertilisers](#)
4. [Manipur — this is not a time for finger-pointing](#)
5. [Invest ahead of time. After a Caribbean cyclone an automatic payment is sent to scuba divers to immediately repair the reef](#)
6. [Indo-US: Take 2](#)
7. [A lifeline for Indian science](#)
8. [Reforming Multilateral Development Banks, advocating for the Global South](#)
9. [Focus on the millets value chain for fortified nutritional security](#)

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

10. [Flood control – Coherent policy needed to address recurring floods](#)
11. [Bad Billions' BFF: Socialism](#)
12. [Central bank credibility is key to achieving a Goldilocks economy](#)
13. [Mahalanobis in the era of Big Data and AI](#)
14. [Why states are falling short on capital spending](#)
15. [Independent boards for all agencies](#)
16. [How NRF aims to boost research in higher educational institutes](#)
17. [Finally India's Moon Moment?](#)
18. [Sound of the Cosmos – India's telescope game can get even better](#)
19. [On urea prices: Fertiliser for thought](#)
20. [Reality check for startups](#)
21. [Uniting for big-bang discoveries](#)

# General Studies Paper – 1

### General Studies - 1

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#### 1. We need a better grasp of our oceanic see-saws

**Source:** The post is based on the article “We need a better grasp of our oceanic see-saws” published in “Mint” on 27th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Indian geography: Monsoon.

**News:** Accurate predictions of the Indian monsoon remain a challenge. Although the Indian Meteorological Department has forecasted a normal monsoon, a private company called Skymet has predicted a deficient monsoon. To enhance the accuracy of these forecasts, it is crucial to better understand the interplay between El-Nino, the IOD (Indian Ocean Dipole), and climate change.

#### What is El-Nino and its impact on monsoon?

During an El Nino event, the **weakening of tropical trade winds** causes warm waters in the Pacific Ocean to flow eastwards, from Asia towards the Americas.

As a result, the coast of the Americas experiences **increased heat and low pressure**, further aggravating the weakening of the trade winds in a **feedback loop**. This phenomenon leads to **cooler and drier** conditions with **reduced rainfall in Asia, including India**.

An El-Nino was indicated recently by high sea surface temperatures in Eastern Pacific (0.5° C more than the normal). Its probable severity and duration are under study. The estimates must also take into account the effect of global warming.

Data since 1950 reveal a clear link between El-Nino years and droughts in India.

#### What is IOD and its impact on monsoon?

IOD refers to **warmer than usual waters in the western Indian Ocean** than in its eastern part. It results in **wetter East Africa and drier Indonesia**.

Currently, the IOD has been **neutral**, but experts suggest that it may transition to a positive phase in the upcoming months.

As monsoon winds reach India from south-west, a **positive IOD could have aided in rainfall** in India and **counter the effect of El-Nino**. For example, in 1997, there was an acute El-Nino but due to a highly positive IOD India got excess rainfall.

#### What should be done?

Understanding the interplay between El Nino, IOD and climate change is crucial as accurate forecasts can have significant implications for agriculture, water resources, and broad economic policy decisions. Therefore, India must invest for a better understanding of factors which impact the monsoon.

#### 2. Express View on RWAs and prejudice: Pettiness of power

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Express View on RWAs and prejudice: Pettiness of power” published in “The Indian Express” on 27th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS1- Social issues. GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

**Relevance-** Issues related to domestic workers

**News-** A housing society in Bengaluru has barred maids from using common areas.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### What are significant issues raised by this notice?

The notice shows the elitist upper-class attitude towards workers.

The notice shows casteism, class prejudice prevalent in society. Their prejudices and bigotries are presented as concerns for “security” and “hygiene”.

Part-time politicians of the RWA impose their will on those who do not have the means to object.

Lord Acton was right when he said that “power corrupts”. Perhaps, petty power corrupts more absolutely.

### 3. Will the Indian Ocean Dipole save the monsoon?

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Will the Indian Ocean Dipole save the monsoon?**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **29th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Indian geography

**News:** The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted a normal monsoon despite forecasts of an El Nino event. El Nino typically leads to a deficit monsoon, but this occurs only around 60% of the time.

What factors contribute to the complex relationship between El Nino and the monsoon?

**El Nino flavours:** Every El Nino is not the same. They differ in terms of where the warm waters appear in the tropical Pacific. An El Nino with warming around the Dateline is referred to as a **Dateline El Nino** or a **Central Pacific El Nino**. It is considered to have a **larger negative impact** on the monsoon, but an exception was 2005 El Nino. An El Nino with stronger warming around the central Pacific is called **Canonical El Nino**.

**Indian Ocean Dipole:** it is thought to have **mitigated the impact of El Nino** in 1997. But the cause-and-effect relationship between monsoon and Indian Ocean Dipole is not clearly understood.

**Atlantic Nino:** It is a similar east-west anomaly pattern in the tropical Atlantic. It also influences the monsoon.

What are the limitations of forecasting models?

Models **cannot reliably forecast Indian Ocean Dipole and Atlantic Nino**. So, their potential role in the evolution of monsoons this season is not completely known.

Models predicting El Nino **cannot confidently forecast exactly where the warming will be or how strong the warming will be** in the early part of an El Nino event. But early indicators suggest that the El Nino of 2023 may evolve to become a Canonical El Nino.

Why has the significance of seasonal total rainfall diminished?

Every aspect of the monsoon has been disturbed the global warming. Even a deficit monsoon comes with large-scale extreme rainfall events and heavy rainfall events are increasing over the dry regions of north-western India.

What compensations could occur this season to reduce the impacts of El Nino?

The Arabian Sea has warmed since January by almost 1.5°C which could offset the impact.

Other factors which may compensate are the Eurasian snow cover and the warm Arctic.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### 4. Between two books, a revelatory social history

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Between two books, a revelatory social history**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **30th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Indian society

**News:** When read together, two notable books by journalists can offer insights into various aspects of socio-cultural change in rural and urban India

#### **What are the two books?**

The first one is “**Blossoms in the Dust**” by Kusum Nair, published in 1965. It explores the human factor in Indian development through Nair’s journey to villages across 14 states.

The second one is “**Dreamers: How Young Indians Are Changing Their World**” by Snigdha Poonam, published in 2018. It documents Poonam’s experiences in provincial towns in eight northern Indian states.

#### **How journalists provide an alternative understanding of social change in India?**

Academic studies of social change in India have been **constrained by methodological constraints**.

On the other hand, journalists have attempted to document social change by interacting with ordinary people and observing the effects of economic, technological, and political changes on their lives.

They provide a different perspective from academia and a **broader understanding of social change** in India.

#### **How does Kusum Nair’s book documents social change?**

Kusum Nair’s book was written when rural poverty was a pressing issue in India. It explores how villagers responded to the state’s efforts to alleviate poverty through economic and social planning.

She discovered signs of **change in old attitudes** in different regions, ranging from significant progress to resistance.

#### **How does Snigdha Poonam’s book documents social change?**

In Snigdha Poonam’s book, she explores the complex social landscape of young people from ordinary backgrounds in provincial towns of northern India. These youth feel disappointed or disillusioned but are determined to fight for themselves.

They display an entrepreneurial spirit with a relentless pursuit of wealth and power, disregarding social and moral obstacles. Despite facing challenging circumstances, they continue to move forward with determination and without hesitation. But many **lack a clear distinction between right and wrong**.

#### **How do the two books interpret the social change when read together?**

The two books, when read together, depict a **materialistic culture** that has significantly impacted traditional beliefs and values in India.

Kusum Nair’s journey through rural India in the 20th century reveals that the **village held great significance** as a place of belonging with emotional and cultural value attached to it.

In Snigdha Poonam’s memoir, she highlights the **diminishing ethical framework** that belonging to a village might give.

Economic and social changes have overlooked the significance of meaningful education and work. The growth of the market and infrastructure are not accompanied by an educated mind and the prospect of employment. This undermines the social fabric’s ability to uphold its cherished norms and morality.

# General Studies Paper –2



General Studies - 2

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1. [A new regime – India must keep an eye on adverse reactions from new drugs and vaccines](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “A new regime – India must keep an eye on adverse reactions from new drugs and vaccines” published in **The Hindu** on **26<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** concerns associated with drugs development in India

**News:** India’s first indigenous mRNA vaccine for the Omicron variant, GEMCOVAC-OM has been approved under emergency use guidelines by the Drug Controller General of India.

**About the vaccine**

**Read Here:** [GEMCOVAC-OM: India’s first mRNA vaccine against Omicron approved](#)

**What is the significance of this vaccine for India?**

Although the WHO has officially declared the end of the pandemic, the development of the vaccine demonstrates **India’s capacity to produce an mRNA vaccine**, which can be rapidly manufactured and scaled up, offering protection against future viruses.

**How are vaccines developed?**

**Vaccine development involves different testing stages**, including petri dish studies, animal trials, and human testing with expanding cohorts. These stages are meant to ensure that vaccines produced are effective and do not cause harm.

However, the scenario during the pandemic was different. Therefore, drug regulators globally allowed vaccine makers to combine multiple stages while evaluating efficacy.

This flexibility was facilitated through the framework of [Emergency Use Authorizations \(EUA\)](#).

**What are the differences between drug approval in India and the US?**

**In the U.S.**, Food and Drug Administration (**FDA**) takes many years to evaluate new drugs and vaccines.

Whereas, India’s regulatory system focuses on first evaluating a drug formulation approved abroad and then assessing its suitability in India.

Further, **the history of clinical trials in India has been characterized by mistrust, arbitrary decrees, and lax regulations**.

In India, there is still a long way to go before there is a reliable system of staged clinical trials and independent regulation for new drugs.

**What can be the way ahead?**

The FDA still authorises updated COVID-19 vaccines under EUA provisions because people are still dying globally due to covid. However, this alone cannot be the basis for continuing with the EUA regime in India.

**India needs to establish a streamlined regulatory process that eliminates unnecessary steps while keeping a close watch on safety and unfavourable responses from new vaccines or drugs.**

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### 2. [Why Taiwan Strait Matters To India](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Why Taiwan Strait Matters To India**” published in “**The Times of India**” on 26th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**Relevance-** Regional and global; issues impacting strategic interest of India

**News-** The article explains the possibility of a crisis in Taiwan strait and its implications for India.

#### **What is the possibility of conflict in Taiwan strait?**

Conflict is not inevitable. A **crisis short of conflict in the Taiwan Strait** is a likely possibility. China can utilise a range of **grey-zone warfare tactics**, from disruption of surface and aerial movement in the strait to an **imposed quarantine**. It will have **geopolitical and economic consequences** across the Indo-Pacific.

Today the US no longer has **deterrence capability**, and the Chinese have **formidable economic and military capacities** to initiate a crisis.

China would destroy its own economy to seize Taiwan because governments have not always **acted rationally** where **critical interests or feelings** are involved.

#### **What will be the implications of the crisis in Taiwan for India?**

Any disruption in the general area of Taiwan will have severe **direct and second-order effects**. It could have an impact on **India’s geopolitical and economic security**.

Half of India’s trade flows to our east. **Disruption in global shipping** beyond the Malacca Strait could have a **crippling impact on our exports**.

If shipping is disrupted, it will have a **consequential impact on supply chains**. Key segments of Indian industry, including **important export sectors** like pharmaceuticals and electronics, are heavily dependent on the supply chain. Thus, It will impact **Indian exports to western markets**.

The possible disruptions in semiconductor supplies could potentially **paralyse industry, especially services**, from **logistics supply chains to e-commerce platforms**.

Disruption of submarine cables could impact the **flow of data between India and Silicon Valley**.

A **Rhodium Group study for Western governments** in 2022 documented the devastating impact of a Taiwan crisis on productivity, employment and national security.

#### **What is the way forward for India to limit the possibilities of conflict in Taiwan strait?**

India urgently needs to undertake a **comprehensive analysis of the possibility of crisis** in Taiwan strait. It should comprehensively cover **all sectors of economy and society**.

The objective should be to identify **potential impacts** of the disruption in the Taiwan Strait area and develop **options to mitigate the crisis**.

India should put this issue on the agenda in **consultations with key partners**. There will be differences, but we might agree on several points towards **stabilising the situation**.

India’s **multi-aligned approach** to foreign policy permits it to have **conversations with diverse players** like Asean, EU, Japan, Republic of Korea and the south Pacific states. They have **vital stakes** in that region.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

The **Global South's respect for India** could be harnessed for peace. A Taiwan crisis could impact the **economically vulnerable Global South** the hardest. India could **build awareness** in the **Global South** about the consequences of such a crisis.

### 3. [Ashok Gulati writes on the US and India: Old friends in a changing world](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Ashok Gulati writes on the US and India: Old friends in a changing world**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on 26th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance-** India and US bilateral relationship in global context

**News-** Recently, PM Modi visited the US and addressed the US Congress a second time.

#### **What are the factors behind increasing closeness between India and the US?**

**Market size of the Indian economy** is increasing. There is the growing **influence of the Indian diaspora** in American business and politics

The **China factor** may be the most important one for the current closeness. **China's meteoric rise** is being seen as a **threat to global security** by many nations.

The QUAD is a forum to **contain aggressive designs of China**. The current **US-India friendship** is only an extension of that at a **bilateral level**.

#### **Why is there a need for cooperation between three big powers-US, India and China?**

The US has been a **superpower**. As per the IMF, the US economy in April 2023 stood at **\$26.6 trillion** with a per capita GDP of \$80,000.

In comparison to that, India has an overall **GDP of \$3.74 trillion** and a per capita GDP of just \$2,600. In **PPP terms**, India's GDP is \$13 trillion, and its per capita GDP is about \$9,000.

China, **in PPP terms**, is already the **largest economy**. In current US dollar terms, the Chinese economy stands at **\$19.37 trillion**, next only to the US.

For **world peace and prosperity**, it would be best if the three countries can work together.

#### **What is the way forward for cooperation between big power to ensure world peace and prosperity?**

**Political system of democracy** should be preferred over **authoritarian regimes**. Democracy has flaws, but it is certainly better than military or authoritarian regimes.

With the **Ukraine-Russia conflict**, global powers are realigning into **new groupings**. India should make efforts to bring **dialogue and diplomacy** to resolve strong differences.

#### **What should be the focus area of India-US cooperation in the near future?**

**Food and nutritional security** are important for the planet. This is being threatened by **climate change with increasing temperatures**. The poorer nations **suffer disproportionately**. India is no exception.

The US is at the forefront of **technologies in agriculture**. In the 1960s several state agricultural projects with the support and mentoring of their counterparts in the US were instrumental in shaping **India's Green Revolution**.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

India's agricultural universities need to be rejuvenated with **cutting-edge technologies** to cope with **climate change** and produce more **nutritious food with less land, less water, and less GHG emissions**.

In the next round of **US-India collaboration**, there should be a special attempt to include **food and agriculture** as one of the **core areas of cooperation**.

### 4. [NCERT deletions discourage debate](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**NCERT deletions discourage debate**” published in **The Indian Express** on **26th June 2023**.

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

**Relevance**: Issues related to curriculum

**News**- An act of “rationalising” by NCERT by pruning parts of the textbooks written in 2005 led to protests by the editors and others.

#### **What are the issues involved in the matter?**

There are **no specific explanations** for deletion of certain chapters or sections. It has not been clarified whether the deletion is caused by **teaching overload, comprehension challenges or being outdated**.

School teachers should have more say in deciding about the revised syllabus, not university academics.

There is **no survey of students' reactions** to the themes of the deleted chapters.

73 educational authorities supported the pruning. This is not clear whether they devoted enough time to **read and reflect on the deleted chapters**.

**Names of the experts** who suggested the deletions are **not in public domain**.

The deletions from textbooks of political science and Indian history were done last year. Most recently, ‘**Themes in World History**’ (Class XI) has also been **rationalised**. These were written by **excellent scholars**.

#### **What is the way forward?**

There is a need to **talk and argue** about the content of **NCERT books**.

History textbooks must be **taken seriously**. For most of our literate citizens, **school textbooks are the only history they will read**.

Artists, writers, and researchers must pitch in to make history **unforgettable**. Thoughtful histories do not simply **glorify or denigrate rulers**. They explain the **intersection between the earth and human activity**, between the **forces of nature and technology**.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### 5. Tracing the arc of American 'exception-ism' for India

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**A lifeline for Indian science**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **28th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance-** India and US bilateral relationship

**News-** The article explains the recent improvement in Indo-US relationship and exceptions made by the US for India to forge a closer partnership.

#### **What is the trajectory of the Indo-US relationship in the recent past?**

The growth of the relationship between India and the United States started 25 years ago, when the U.S. **imposed sanctions** against India for nuclear weapons in May 1998.

Since then, the relationship between India and America has grown year-on-year.

It was built by **five American Presidents** (Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Joe Biden) and **three Indian Prime Ministers** (Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh, Narendra Modi) over the first two decades of the 21st century.

The **Clinton-Vajpayee-era** gave impetus to **summit-level diplomacy** in the relationship. The **Manmohan-Bush and Manmohan-Obama relationship** highlighted **nuclear diplomacy**. **Modi-Obama and Modi-Trump** worked on **trade and military diplomacy**.

During Modi's recent state visit to Washington, the two nations forged ahead with **technology diplomacy**.

#### **Which are the exceptions made by the US specifically for India in the first quarter of this century?**

**Civil nuclear deal**– In 1998, Mr. Clinton signed a waiver to the sanctions on both India and Pakistan.

The Bush administration pushed for **civil nuclear exemptions**. It resulted in the **India-U.S. Joint Statement in 2005, a waiver under the Non-Proliferation Act, the Henry Hyde Act and the 123 Agreement with India**.

The Obama visit to Delhi in 2010 announced another set of exceptions for India on **export controls and high technology trade and transfers** under the **U.S. Export Administration Regulations (EAR) and International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR)**.

These exceptions were made even though India never joined the **NPT Treaty regime** and nor signed the **CTBT**. These were also “**India-specific**” **waivers** not available to other **non-NPT countries** such as Pakistan.

**Russian angle**– After **CAATSA of 2017**, the Trump administration avoided sanctioning India for the **Russian S-400 missile system**, but **sanctioned Turkey and China** for the same purchases.

In the wake of the Russian war in Ukraine, the U.S. did not apply **secondary sanctions** against India for its considerable **oil imports or defence engagement** from Russia. This is indeed an exception.

**Religious freedom**– Finally, the U.S. has accorded **International Religious Freedom Act exemptions** to India for the past four years.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

The **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom** has made repeated recommendations to place India on a list of **“Countries of Particular Concern”**. But the State Department has not complied.

**Why has the U.S. institutionalised such a broad-based waiver policy for India over two-and-a-half decades?**

The first reason is the **promise of ties** with India. It is the world’s **most populous nation, inclusive, pluralistic democracy** for most of its history with a record in non-proliferation.

Second, there is India’s attractiveness as an **economic market and a military buyer**.

Third, is India’s **boundary problems from Beijing**. India can be a **more dependable partner** than European allies in providing a counter to China.

Fourth, is the **Indian American diaspora**. It has distinguished itself as a **professional, prosperous and unproblematic community**. It is the **biggest votary** of better **India-U.S. ties**.

**What are the biggest challenges in this relationship?**

The exceptions made for India can be **reversed at any time**. Former close partners of the U.S., such as Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia have experienced the same.

The **geopolitical context of ties**, driven by a desire to **counter China**, or **rein in Russia** is also an **American construct**. It is not followed by India.

### 6. [Spring cleaning – on Regulations on Graduate Medical Education \(GMER\)](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“Spring cleaning”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **28th June 2023**.

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

**News** – The National Medical Commission has withdrawn the new Regulations on Graduate Medical Education (GMER) without any explanation.

**What are some facts about new GMER regulations?**

The regulations have introduced a **longitudinal programme based on attitude, ethics, and communication competencies** for young medical students.

It lays stress on **ethical values, being responsive to patient needs, and improved communication, early clinical experience**.

It had specified that lectures would not exceed a third of the schedule. The bulk of the course would include **interactive sessions, practical, clinical experience, and case studies**.

It calls for a **family adoption program through village outreach**, for each MBBS student, and a **‘pandemic module’**.

It has advocated for the **reduction of the overall time period** for students to complete the MBBS course to nine years, **fixed number of attempts** to clear papers, and **common counselling** for admission from 2024.

If a student failed to clear any exam, she could have appeared in the **supplementary examination**. The students, if successful, could have proceeded with the same batch.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### What is the necessity of a new GMER?

The new regulations aimed at making medical education more **learner-centric, patient-centric, gender-sensitive, outcome-oriented and environment-appropriate**.

The GMER was notified in 1997. It is the right time to take a **relook** at these, and **adapt them** to changing requirements of **demography, socio-economic contexts, and advancements in science and technology**.

New GMER will enable the country's medical students to be **future-ready**.

### 7. [The concerns about India-U.S. digital trade](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“The concerns about India-U.S. digital trade”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **28th June 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance**- India and US bilateral relationship

**News**– During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's U.S. state visit, cooperation on technology emerged as a prominent outcome.

### What is the current status of India-U.S. technology trade?

In FY2023, the U.S. emerged as India's **biggest overall trading partner**. The **bilateral trade** was \$128.55 billion in 2022-23.

However, **digital or technology services** did not emerge as a **prominent sector of bilateral trade**. The U.S. had a **\$27 billion deficit in trade in digital services** with India in 2020.

In the recent past, the two countries have been ramping up their **tech partnership through moves like [the iCET](#)**.

Under the iCET, India and the U.S. also established a **Strategic Trade Dialogue**. It is focused on addressing **regulatory barriers** and **aligning export controls** for **smoother trade and deeper cooperation in critical areas**.

### What are the concerns raised by U.S. tech firms?

The CCIA in its note has talked about the **“significant imbalance”** and **“misalignment”** in the **U.S.-India economic relationship**.

The U.S.'s **market access, trade and openness** to Indian companies to operate in the U.S. has not been **reciprocated** by the Indian side. The Indian government has deployed a range of tools by their **protectionist industrial policy**.

It cites the example of India's guidelines on the **sharing of geospatial data**. It provides **preferential treatment** to Indian companies.

It has also expressed discontent over India's moving away from **longstanding democratic norms and values**, and **government censorship and control over political speech**.

### What are US firms' concerns over taxation measures in India?

U.S. tech firms have concerns related to the **“[equalisation levy](#)”** that India charges on digital services.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

In 2020, the Centre came out with the 'Equalisation Levy 2.0'. It imposes a **2% tax on gross revenues** received by a **non-resident e-commerce operator** from the **e-commerce services** to Indian residents.

The equalisation levy led to **double taxation** and further **complicated the taxation framework**. Besides, there are questions about the **constitutional validity and compliance with international obligations**.

### What are US firms' concerns about India's IT Rules 2021?

The IT Rules place compliance burden on social media intermediaries (SMIs) and platforms. Several U.S. firms end up falling under the ambit.

Some points of concern raised are the **impractical compliance deadlines and content take-down protocols**. The IT Rules require intermediaries to **take down content** within 24 hours upon receiving a government or court order.

The platforms are also required to appoint a **local compliance officer**.

There is a major criticism against the government's institution of the **three-member Grievance Appellate Committees** to hear user complaints.

### What has been flagged in the new draft of the data protection law?

There are ambiguities about **cross-border data flows, compliance timelines, and data localisation requirements**.

**Data localisation requirements** by governments significantly increase **operating costs** of companies. These can be seen as **discriminatory by foreign companies**.

Foreign tech companies like Meta or Amazon operating in India find it convenient to **store their data** wherever they have their servers.

**Section 17 of the draft Act** says that **cross-border flow of data** will only be allowed for a **list of countries** notified by the Centre. **On what basis** will these countries be notified and **what the terms** for such transfers will be is not mentioned in the draft.

### What have firms said about the Telecom bill?

As per CCIA, the **draft Telecommunications Bill, 2022** would redefine "**telecommunication services**" to include a wide range of **internet-enabled services**. These services have little resemblance to the **telephony services**.

The current draft of the Bill puts both **Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)** and **Over-the-top (OTT) communication** services under the definition of **telecommunication services**.

The proposed law would subject a number of platforms to **obligations such as licensing requirements; government access to data; encryption requirements, internet shutdowns, seizure of infrastructure, and possibly monetary obligations for the sector**.

### What are the other policy barriers?

Last year, the Parliamentary Committee on Finance Proposed the adoption of a "**Digital Competition Act**" to address **anti-competitive practices** by big tech companies.

The CCIA says that the proposal appeared to be largely **targeted at U.S. tech companies**.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### 8. [A model for quality and inclusive education](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**A model for quality and inclusive education**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **28th June 2023**.

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

**News**– The National Institutional Ranking Framework, adopted by the Ministry of Education to rank institutions of higher education in India reveals the consistent success of Tamil Nadu in providing higher education.

#### **What are some facts about NIRF?**

The NIRF employs a **ranking metric comprising five parameters** with **varying weightage** to assess the quality of colleges.

These parameters are Teaching- (1) **Learning and Resources Graduation Outcome**, (2) **Research and Professional Practices**, (3) **Outreach and Inclusivity** and (4) **Perception**.

Each of these parameters has **several components**, which again have **varying weightage**.

The number of colleges participating in the NIRF ranking has grown from **535 in 2017 to 2,746 in 2023**.

NIRF ranking has already gained **wide traction and credibility**. Many good-quality colleges participate in the exercise. A place in the top 100 would bring them repute and increase demand for admission.

#### **What is the performance of the state as per NIRF-ranking of 2023?**

Of the **top 100 NIRF-ranked colleges** in 2023, **Tamil Nadu has the largest share** (35). Delhi (32) comes next, followed by Kerala (14) and West Bengal (8). These four States collectively contribute to **89% of the top colleges**.

**Bigger States** such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Odisha do not have a single college in the top 100.

#### **Is the performance of Tamil Nadu in congruence with its motto of development with social justice?**

Chennai accounts for only nine colleges. Coimbatore competes with Chennai. Tiruchirappalli, with five colleges is next. The remaining 12 colleges are widely spread across 11 places. So, there are no **wider regional disparities**.

The **largest beneficiaries** from Chennai, Coimbatore, and Tiruchirappalli are likely to be **urban dwellers**.

Yet, the top-ranked colleges from these cities are serving the **poor and disadvantaged social groups**. This is because Tamil Nadu has one of the **highest reservation quotas**. It has been quite **effective in its implementation** of the reservation policy.

More than one-third of the top-ranked colleges are **dispersed across places**. They provide an **opportunity for quality education** for students who do not have the **economic resources and social networks** to study in colleges from Chennai, Coimbatore, and Tiruchirappalli.

#### **What are lessons from Tamil Nadu success in prodigy quality higher education?**

Tamil Nadu’s **impressive and consistent performance** in higher education shows that **quality and inclusion** can be achieved **together and consistently**.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

It should prompt other southern States, having a reasonably **inclusive and effective social welfare architecture**, to introspect why they lag far behind. It **should inspire** them to take action to rectify issues.

### 9. [How India's renewed ties with Egypt can help its global standing](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**How India's renewed ties with Egypt can help its global standing**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **28th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India.

**News:** The renewed India-Egypt collaboration empowers both nations to expand economic and geopolitical influence.

[Read more – India Egypt Relations – Recent Developments](#)

#### **How renewed India-Egypt ties help both nations economically?**

The partnership between India, the fifth largest economy in the world, and Egypt, the second largest economy in Africa, provides a **strong foundation for trade and manufacturing activities**.

It provides a **gateway for India to access African markets**, particularly within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

By establishing Indian industrial zones in the Suez Canal region, Egypt's position in **global supply chains** would be further strengthened. India can **leverage its manufacturing capabilities** and tap into the growing markets in Africa, across sectors like electric vehicles, pharmaceuticals, and electronics.

#### **How renewed India-Egypt ties help both nations geopolitically?**

Egypt's proactive diplomacy with key African nations has solidified its standing as a **significant player within the continent**. India can build on Egypt's expanding presence in Africa and elevate its own position on the global stage.

Both Egypt and India are **emerging voices in the Global South**. India has actively sought partnerships with like-minded nations within the G20 to establish a middle ground between the West, Russia, and China. Likewise, Egypt has positioned itself as a prominent advocate for the Global South, particularly in Africa, further strengthening its influence and international standing.

India can showcase its **defense capabilities** and support Egypt in developing its own defense industry. Egypt's existing defense alliances with African nations make it a crucial gateway for India to expand its defense capabilities and access important markets, particularly in Africa.

### 10. [PM Modi pushes for Uniform Civil Code: How it can impact different communities](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**PM Modi pushes for Uniform Civil Code: How it can impact different communities**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **28th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – [Indian Polity](#) – Directive Principles of State Policy

**News:** After the Law Commission invited views on the UCC (Uniform Civil Code), PM Modi has pushed for it.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### What is the UCC?

Currently, India's **personal laws are complex and varied** with each religious community following its own specific regulations. UCC is the idea of having a **common code of personal laws** for people of all religions.

UCC also finds mention in **Article 44** of the Constitution under **Part IV** dealing with **DPSPs** (Directive Principles of State Policy).

### What was the debate in the Constituent Assembly?

Several Muslim members of the assembly suggested adopting a common civil code that would apply with **prior consent**. However, Dr. Ambedkar strongly opposed the suggestion.

**Mohamad Ismail** proposed that the personal law of a community should not be changed without the prior approval of the community.

**Naziruddin Ahmad** pointed out that every religious community would be affected by the UCC as each community has its own religious beliefs and practices.

**B Pocker Sahib Bahadur** brought attention to the diversity of personal laws and **KM Munshi** stated that impact of the UCC is not just limited to minorities, but it affects the majority community too.

Finally, **Dr. Ambedkar** assured that the UCC would not be enforced upon the people and underlined the possibility that a future Parliament could apply UCC in a purely voluntary manner.

### What have the Law Commissions said?

The **21st Law Commission** issued a consultation paper on the issue. The paper titled "**Reforms of Family law**" argued for reforming family laws across religions through amendments and codification to limit ambiguity in interpretation and application.

Since over three years has passed since the paper's publication, the **22nd Law Commission** considered it necessary to start **fresh deliberations** over the subject in the light of its importance, relevance and various court orders.

### What has the Supreme Court said?

In a number of rulings, the Supreme Court has supported the introduction of UCC.

In the landmark **Shah Bano case of 1985**, the Supreme Court upheld the right of a Muslim woman to seek alimony.

In **Sarla Mudgal vs Union of India (1995)**, the Supreme Court again stressed the need for UCC.

In October 2022, the Centre, responding to a plea before the Supreme Court for uniformity in personal laws, said that it is under **constitutional obligation** to introduce a UCC and the matter would be placed before the 22<sup>nd</sup> Law Commission.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### 11. Private, unlimited – Indo-US tech deals expand scope for private sector

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Private, unlimited**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **29th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India.

**News:** Indo-US tech deals signed during Prime Minister Modi’s state visit to the US appear to primarily benefit the government sector, but they have also opened opportunities for the private sector.

How would Artemis Accords benefit India’s private sector?

Compared to the dominant presence of private American aerospace companies like Space X in the USD 360 billion global space economy, India’s share is hardly 2 percent.

The partnership has the potential to **expand India’s space-military complex**, much like NASA’s space missions facilitated the growth of a dynamic private sector ecosystem through technology and research and development exchanges.

In 2019, ISRO established a commercial subsidiary called Newspace India Ltd. to **facilitate private participation** in space-related activities. The collaborations under the Artemis Accords have the potential to take this initiative to a higher level.

How would Mineral Security Partnership benefit India’s private sector?

A Mumbai-based company has become the first Indian firm to set up a unit to produce critical battery parts for electric vehicles in the US under this treaty.

The project is expected to **boost the supply chain for critical minerals**. It will give India an advantage in developing an ecosystem for electric vehicle parts. This would also **reduce domestic industry’s dependence on China**.

The government should on these initiatives as they offer a chance of a high-tech leap for India’s manufacturing sector.

### 12. Rankings, and the realities of higher education

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Rankings, and the realities of higher education**” published in **The Hindu** on **29th June 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** Higher education

**News:** The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) recently released the India Rankings for 2023 , evaluates institutions on certain parameters.

What are the issues with NIRF ranking?

**The first** is the issue of **participation of institutions**. As per the **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021**, only 12.3% of higher educational institutions participated in the ranking process.

Further, the lack of **participation of institutions** from rural areas raises questions about the **inherent urban bias** in the ranking framework.

**The second issue** is the incongruence between **quantity and quality**. Of the top 100 colleges ranked by NIRF, 35 are from Tamil Nadu, 32 are from Delhi, 14 are from Kerala, and the remaining are from the rest of India.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

**Quality differences** are evident between private and government institutions as well. In the overall rankings, the highest rank secured by a private institution is 15.

**The third issue** stems from the close correlation between faculty strength and rankings. **Only 33.98%** adhere to the **AICTE-prescribed faculty-student ratio of 1:20**.

**The fourth issue** is reflected in **scientific publications**. Only 12.3% of institutions which have participated in the ranking contribute close to 90% of scholarly output in the country.

What is the way forward for improving higher education?

Both the Union government and the States should  **earmark substantial funds** in their respective budgets for this.

India's **share in the overall world scientific publications** is about **4.81%**. In comparison, China's share of world publications increased from **5% in 2000 to 26% in 2018**. This was facilitated by **massive research investments** by the Chinese government.

**Informed evidence-based policy** decisions should be taken in line with **NIRF standards**.

The quality of State universities can be enhanced. It would also serve the purpose of **servicing students in rural locations**.

### 13. **Manila and New Delhi: A 21st Century Partnership**

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Manila and New Delhi: A 21st Century Partnership**" published in **The Indian Express** on **29th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral and regional groupings

**Relevance:** India-Philippines Relations

**News:** Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines will be meeting with India's External Affairs Minister for the fifth iteration of the Philippines-India Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation in New Delhi.

What is the potential generated by the partnership between India and the Philippines?

**India's economic trajectory** indicates that it will become the **world's third-largest economy** by 2027. Meanwhile, the **Philippines** is on the threshold of achieving upper-middle-income status and becoming a **trillion-dollar economy by 2033**.

Both nations are promoting **greater inclusion and the empowerment** of growing populations. They are driving **smarter strategies for a prosperous and climate-proof future**.

Between 2009 and 2022, some **280 billion Philippine pesos were invested** in renewable energy technologies in the Philippines, almost half of them going to solar energy.

**Synergies** can also be unlocked in the **context of the "Digital India" project** and the Philippines' spirited shoring up of our digital infrastructure.

The Philippines is working to become a **spacefaring country by 2030**. **Capacity-building and collaboration** between the **Philippine Space Agency and the ISRO** are on the horizon.

In defence and security, the **signing of a \$374-million contract** for the procurement by the Philippines' defence forces of **India's BrahMos Shore-based Anti-Ship Missile System** in January 2022, signals only a first step.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

India's "Act East Policy" also aims to strengthen **economic, strategic, and cultural relations in the Indo-Pacific region.**

What is the way forward?

To harness the power of the Indo-Pacific as a catalyst for growth, **more intensified regional cooperation** is essential.

Stronger **economic integration, improved connectivity, and increased innovation** are key to buttressing the region as a **global economic powerhouse.**

### 14. Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023: Manifestly arbitrary, clearly unconstitutional

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Manifestly arbitrary, clearly unconstitutional**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **29th June 2023.**

**Syllabus:** GS2- Issues pertaining to federalism

**Relevance:** Constitutional issues related to NCT of Delhi

**News:** The article explains the issues related to the current tussle between the Delhi government and the central government for control over service.

#### **What is the issue?**

In 2015, Aam Aadmi Party won the Delhi Legislative Assembly elections, The central government issued a notification taking **control over services** in the National Capital Territory. This sparked a **long legal battle** between the Delhi government and the central government.

In May 2023, the Court ruled decisively in **favour of the Delhi government.** Within days, the central government **issued an ordinance** amending the Government of **National Capital Territory of Delhi Act of 1991.**

Through this ordinance, the central government wants to **undo the Court's judgement.** It deprived the Delhi Legislative Assembly from **enacting laws pertaining to services** within the NCT.

What are the justifications offered by the central government in favour of the ordinance?

Delhi's status as the national capital requires a **"balancing" of interests between the Delhi government and the central government.**

**Article 239AA of the Constitution** authorises Parliament to pass laws in areas that fall within the **exclusive domain** of the States. One of these fields belongs to **"services"**.

#### **What are issues related to central government ordinance?**

The ordinance violates and undermines the **core principles of democracy, representative governance, and a responsive administration.** Any functioning modern polity requires the performance of a vast range of **daily administrative functions.**

**Violates the triple chain of accountability:** In its judgement in May 2023, the Court explicitly recognised this by formulating the concept of the "triple chain of accountability".

**Note:** *The triple chain of accountability is integral to representative democracy. Civil servants are accountable to the cabinet. The cabinet is accountable to the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly is accountable to the electorate.*

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

Any action that impacts this “triple chain of accountability” undermines the core constitutional principle of representative government. The Delhi Services Ordinance impacts this triple chain of accountability by taking away the services from the jurisdiction of the Delhi government.

**Impacts the degree of flexibility:** Delhi’s “special status” is already recognised in Article 239AA. Article 239AA already creates the balance between the interests of representative governance, and national interest in the national capital.

Article 239AA also grants power to Parliament to pass laws, with respect to Delhi, under any of the fields that are otherwise reserved to the States.

The purpose of this is to maintain a degree of flexibility. Unforeseeable circumstances might require Parliament to pass specific legislation.

The Delhi Services Ordinance does not respond to any specific circumstance. It takes away the Delhi government’s power over services in all circumstances.

Indeed, the ordinance articulates **no specific or concrete reason** for its enactment. It only mentions the **need to “balance” interests**. This is illogical as that balancing has already been achieved within the Constitution.

### 15. [That Wasn't a Capital Idea](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**That Wasn’t A Capital Idea**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **30th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Issues pertaining to federalism

**Relevance**– Constitutional issues related to NCT of Delhi

**News**- Central government has [promulgated an ordinance](#) to overrule the SC judgement regarding the control over services in UT of Delhi.

**What are [some observations by SC](#) in its judgment regarding the control over services in Delhi?**

The executive power of the Union ought not to extend to where there is an elected government.

“Services” are not excluded from [Article 239AA\(3\)\(a\)](#). The Delhi government would have both **legislative and executive power** over services

The judgement talks about the role of **civil servants, their accountability**. It would not be appropriate for ministers who **formulate policies** to not have the **means of implementing** them through officials.

SC concluded that services that related to the excluded subjects of “**public order, police and land**” would remain within the domain of the Union.

IAS and other service officers would be subject to Delhi government control in all other areas of day-to-day governance.

The involvement of the Union of India in the administration of NCTD is limited by **constitutional provisions**. Any further expansion would be contrary to **constitutional governance**.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### What is the centre response to SC judgement?

The ordinance provides for a '**National Capital Civil Service Authority**' consisting of the Delhi CM, the chief secretary and principal home secretary. It would decide by majority on **postings, transfers and disciplinary proceedings** of officers.

GOI has concurrently also filed a review petition against the judgement

### What are similar instances where the centre has followed the same approach with regard to the judicial process?

The farm bills and land acquisition amendments were both initially via ordinances and had to be withdrawn.

The ordinance to get around SC's judgement limiting **executive influence in tribunals** was struck down in July 2021.

The same method was adopted to **grant extensions to the director of the ED** after SC curtailed the extension.

Bypassing judicial orders or other laws through ordinance route is a disregard for the judicial and legislative process.

### 16. [India needs a stronger statistical system for better policymaking](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article "**India needs a stronger statistical system for better policymaking**" published in **livemint** on **30th June 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS2- Governance – Government Policies for various sectors

**Relevance**: Need of data in effective policy making

**News**- Official statistics provide crucial inputs to policymaking in any modern democracy. The last 75 years have seen change in India's economy and society so our statistical system also need to change accordingly.

### What are the issues with respect to the present statistical system?

**Firstly**, the **statistical system has been politicized** and has largely lost its independence. While all governments have been complicit, the **credibility** of the statistical system is **now under threat**.

For example, **2017-18 Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES)** was junked without any public debate. In their absence, we are using national accounts and inflation data that is **more than a decade old**.

Similarly, for the first time after independence, **India is unlikely to have the decennial population Census** amounts to another attempt at denying access to vital data.

**Data on caste as part of the SECC 2011** is yet to be released despite demands from the general public and academic community.

**Secondly**, even when data has been released, there were **attempts to denigrate and delegitimize it**. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (**PLFS**) is an example which faced unnecessary and irrelevant criticism.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

**Finally**, for every official statistics, there is **plenty of alternative data that is thrown up** to raise doubts on the credibility of official statistics. Provident fund and pensions data was used to discredit the official employment statistics and create an alternative narrative.

### **What is the way forward?**

Data-sets on employment, poverty, inequality, education and even basic population numbers are **essential inputs for several government programmes**.

Public availability of such data would let **researchers generate debates** on various important matters of governance.

In fact, credible data is no less **essential to a democracy** than a free press.

The need of the hour is to **strengthen the country's statistical system** to reflect these changes and provide better-quality data.

An essential prerequisite for this is that the **system is given the independence** needed to generate data without fear or favour.

### 17. Fiscal federalism needs a look-in by the 16th Finance Commission

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Fiscal federalism needs a look-in by the 16th Finance Commission**” published in **live Mint** on **30th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2-Fiscal Federalism

**Relevance:** Appointment of The Sixteenth Finance Commission (16th FC)

**News-** The soon-to-be-appointed 16<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission will have to tackle problems in Centre-state relations ,solve issues of centralization and delegation of funds to lower levels.

### **What are the challenging issues in Fiscal Federalism?**

**First**, there is the **intersecting domain of the Finance Commission and Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council**. The latter's decisions impact the own tax revenue flows of states and, more importantly, the size of the central tax revenue pool .

**Second**, the demands for **greater centralization of expenditure** assignment is another issue. India has a quasi-federal system. For purposes of legislation, regulation and administration, Schedule 7 of the Constitution assigns 47 subjects to the Concurrent List.

**Third**, there is the **issue of externalities**. If social benefits or losses can spill over across boundaries of a lower-level jurisdiction, it requires assignment of the subject to a higher-level jurisdiction with wider spatial coverage.

**Fourth is the third tier of government**.where it is left to the states to decide what functions from the state list in the 7th schedule should be further delegated and assigned to local governments.

Finally, **equity considerations** may require greater centralization to enable the provision of comparable levels of public or merit services for all citizens in a country.

### **What is Way forward?**

Most of these problems haven been sorted out and GST has now emerged as a large and buoyant source of revenue for both the Centre and states.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

**Vijay Kelkar, chairman of the 13th FC**, suggested that **consolidated funds** should be created for PRIs and ULBs, funded by earmarking a share of the central GST and state GST for them.

The capacity of local-level institutions should be strengthened

A change in the assignment of subjects under schedule 7, whether towards greater centralization or greater decentralization, will entail **constitutional amendments**.

### 18. [India and the US-China chips war](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **“India and the US-China chips war”** published in **The Indian Express** on **30<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations – Effect of Policies & Politics of Developed & Developing Countries on India’s Interests

**Relevance:** concerns with the semiconductor industry

**News:** The article explains about the concerns associated with the semiconductor industry.

**What are the geopolitical issues involved with the semiconductors?**

**Read Here:** [Highlight the reasons behind the China-Taiwan stand-off. What lessons can India take from it?](#) and [Taiwan matters more than we’d like to tell ourselves](#)

**How is the US trying to control the dominance of China and increase its dominance in the semiconductor industry?**

The US has – **1)** denied semiconductor technology to China to prevent it from gaining high tech dominance over the world, and **2)** pumped up its own domestic capacity for making chips.

**During the Trump Administration**, Chinese telecom giant Huawei and its several ancillaries were deemed as a threat to US national security, leading to restrictions on their access to chips from US companies.

**The Biden Administration maintained** restrictions and introduced its own measure, which cut the world’s largest manufacturer of 5G phones and other Chinese companies from accessing semiconductors made using American tools and software.

The US has also collaborated with key partners to limit China’s access to chip technology.

**According to the data**, China’s chip imports from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan (members of the US-led “Chip 4 Alliance”) have declined by 20% in the first five months of 2023.

**The US also passed the [CHIPS and Science Act](#)**, which allocated \$280 billion in new funding for domestic semiconductor research and manufacturing.

**The US has moved towards semiconductor friendshoring in the Quad**, where the members committed themselves to building “resilient, diverse and secure supply chains of critical and emerging technologies”.

**How is the US and India partnering in the field of semiconductors?**

Both nations have announced the US-India [Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies \(iCET\)](#)



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

**The two countries have also agreed to strengthen bilateral collaboration** on resilient supply chains, support the development of a semiconductor design, manufacturing, and fabrication ecosystem in India, etc.

**An MoU was signed between the two nations on** Semiconductor Supply Chain and Innovation Partnership to promote commercial opportunities, research, talent, and skill development.

As part of these developments, **Micron Technology, a leading US semiconductor firm, announced a proposed investment** of up to \$825 million to build a facility in India, with the Indian government combined investment value to \$2.75 billion.

**What are the challenges with India in manufacturing chips?**

Currently, **India lacks the capability to provide 24×7 power and consistent water supply, essential for chip making industry. There is also a lack of skilled workforce.**

**The Indian government has also shown reluctance in pursuing a free trade agreement and a bilateral investment agreement with Taiwan,** which is hindering to attract investments from TSMC, the world's biggest chip maker.

Hence, the absence of a complete “chip ecosystem” is one of the reasons why major international chip makers have not yet shown interest in establishing operations in India, despite the government's willingness to promote the industry.

**Must Read:** [India's semiconductor mission might need a compass](#) and [India's push for semiconductors](#)

**What can be the way ahead for India?**

It could take India 10-20 years to establish itself as a serious player in the semiconductor industry. However, India has positioned itself in the global chip competition by forging a technology partnership with the US to a new level.

### 19. [Why women bureaucrats lose out on senior posts](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Why women bureaucrats lose out on senior posts**” published in **The Indian Express** on **30<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues Related with Women

**Relevance:** concerns with women bureaucrats in getting top positions.

**News:** In June 1991, India's 10th Prime Minister, P V Narasimha Rao, formed a group of bureaucrats, technocrats, and politicians to initiate the liberalization of India's economy. This team consisted entirely of men.

**Why weren't women included in the team?**

**First,** the Indian Administrative Services (IAS), from which the team members were primarily selected, had a limited number of women. Recruitment rules were biased towards men, as only unmarried women were allowed to join the services and were required to resign if they got married.

**Second,** by the time Rao was putting together his team, women officers were either too junior in rank or ongoing systemic issues kept them out of senior positions.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

**Third**, despite the removal of entry barriers, there was a lack of trust in women's capabilities. Women were often assigned to "soft" departments, and there has been a lack of representation of women in top positions in India.

### **Why are women bureaucrats not given top positions in India?**

The issue of representation of women in senior positions in India is not due to a lack of talent. There are highly deserving female civil servants who are just as qualified as their male counterparts.

However, **it is systematic challenges and bias that prevents women from holding top position.**

**For instance**, Renuka Viswanathan, the first woman district magistrate in Karnataka, held a doctorat d'etat (higher than a doctorate) in public finance.

However, when she sought a position in the finance ministry in the 1980s, her appointment was not easily granted.

Further, there were many competent women bureaucrats during the 1990s who could have been considered as part of the Rao's team. However, they weren't considered.

Moreover, even when the government hired laterally for the team in 1991, women were given lower positions compared to the men.

**For instance**, Padma Desai was offered a lower grade compared to the position her husband Montek Singh Ahluwalia received when he joined laterally at a younger age and with lower qualifications than hers.

Moreover, organisations like the IMF and the World Bank served as ways through which talent came to India.

However, even in these institutions men have enjoyed top positions, including the position of executive director (India) to the World Bank, to this day.

### **What can be the way ahead?**

There has been a positive shift in recent years in the representation of women in the Indian civil services.

**For instance**, in the latest round of the union civil service examinations, out of the 933 candidates selected, 320 were women, marking the highest number to date.

However, these numbers do not indicate how many will reach top leadership positions in the services, particularly in the ministries of finance, commerce and industry, home, and defence.

Therefore, as the number of women entering the services increases, it presents **an opportunity for the organization to reevaluate their talent retention and advance policies to ensure that women are** equally represented in high-ranking positions.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### 20. [A new chapter in India-Africa ties can be written](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “A new chapter in India-Africa ties can be written” published in the “The Hindu” on 1st July 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral and regional groupings

**Relevance-** India and Africa relationship

**News-** The 20-member Africa Expert Group (AEG), established by the Vivekananda International Foundation, recently presented the VIF Report entitled ‘India-Africa Partnership: Achievements, Challenges and Roadmap 2023’.

#### **What are some key takeaways from the report?**

The report examines the transitions unfolding in Africa- **demographic, economic, political and social**. These changes along with the adverse **impact of the pandemic and complicated geopolitics** will transform the continent.

It is slowly heading toward **regional integration**. It is devoted to **democracy, peace and progress**.

There is high **competition in Africa** among at least **half a dozen countries** such as China, Russia, the United States, the European Union.

It is for strengthening their relations with parts of Africa to ensure **market access, gain energy and mineral security, and increase political and economic influence**.

China has an **edge over** others with a **consistent and robust policy** since 2000. It is Africa’s **biggest economic partner**. China has played the role of ‘the **infrastructure developer**’, ‘the **resource provider**’, and ‘the **financier**’.

Since 2007, Chinese leaders have visited the continent **123 times**, while **251 African leaders** have visited China.

India has a **substantive partnership** with Africa and a **rich fund of goodwill**. But it is essential for New Delhi to review its **Africa policy** periodically. It should **stay resilient** by making the required changes, and should **focus on its implementation**.

#### **What is the way forward for India and Africa relationship as suggested by the report?**

**Political and diplomatic cooperation**– It should be strengthened by restoring **periodic leaders’ summits** through the medium of the **India-Africa Forum Summit**.

A new **annual strategic dialogue** between the chairperson of the African Union (AU) and India’s External Affairs Minister should be launched in 2023.

There is a need to forge **consensus among G-20 members** on the **Africa’s entry into the G-20** as a full member. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent communication to G-20 leaders requesting support for this proposal.

MEA should have a **secretary exclusively in charge of African affairs** to further enhance the **implementation and impact of the Africa policy**.

**Defence and security cooperation**– The government needs to increase the number of **defence attachés** deployed in Africa and **expand dialogue on defence issues**.

It should widen the footprint of **maritime collaboration and expand lines of credit** to facilitate defence exports.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

More can be done to increase the number of **defence training slots and enhance cooperation in counterterrorism, cyber security and emerging technologies.**

**Economic and development cooperation**– India-Africa trade touching **\$98 billion in FY22–23** is an encouraging development. This figure can go up if access to finance through the creation of an **Africa Growth Fund** is ensured.

A special package to improve **project exports** and build up cooperation in the **shipping domain** has been suggested. A special focus on promoting **trilateral cooperation and deepening science and technology cooperation** could pay rich dividends.

**Socio-cultural cooperation**– It should be increased through **greater interaction between universities, think tanks, civil society and media organisations** in India and select African countries.

Setting up a National Centre for African Studies will be the right step. **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) and ICCR scholarships** awarded to Africans should be named after famous African figures.

**Visa measures** for African students who come to India for higher education should be liberalised. They should also be given **work visas for short periods.**

The report suggests a **special mechanism for implementing the ‘Roadmap 2030’.** This can best be secured through **close collaboration between the MEA and the National Security Council Secretariat.**

### 21. That Wasn't A Capital Idea – On Ministers dismissal by Governor

**Source-** The post is based on the article “The Governor’s move is dangerous, unconstitutional” and the article “A misadventure” published in “The Hindu” on 1st July 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 2- Issues pertaining to federalism

**Relevance**– Governor role in federal matters

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

After dismissal of the Minister, the Tamil Nadu Governor again wrote to the Chief Minister that he was holding the order in abeyance and was seeking the **opinion of the Attorney General of India.**

#### **What are the issues involved in this matter?**

Governor seeking **ex post facto legal opinion** reflects poorly on his **decision-making prowess.**

This unprecedented act of dismissing a Minister without the **recommendation of the Chief Minister** of the State, is going to set a **dangerous precedent.** It has the potential to **destabilise State governments** putting the **federal system** in jeopardy.

If Governors are allowed to exercise the **power of dismissal** of individual Ministers without the recommendation of the Chief Minister, the whole **constitutional system** will collapse.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

**What does the constitutional provision say about the Governor's power to dismiss a Minister?**

Under **Article 164 of the Constitution**, the Chief Minister is appointed by the Governor **without any advice** from anyone. But he appoints the individual Ministers only on the **advice of the Chief Minister**.

The Article implies that the Governor cannot **appoint an individual Minister** according to **his discretion**. So, logically, the Governor can **dismiss a Minister** only on the **advice of the Chief Minister**.

The Chief Minister alone has the **discretion to choose and dismiss his Ministers**. This is a **political decision** of the Chief Minister, who is **ultimately answerable** to the people.

It is true that the **pleasure doctrine** has been brought into the Constitution of India from the **Government of India Act, 1935**. The **pleasure of the Governor** under the Constitution of India is not the same as that of the **colonial Governor**. Thus, the Governor during the colonial rule had **absolute discretion** to choose a Minister and dismiss him.

**Government of India Act, 1935** confers on the Governor the **discretion to choose as well as dismiss** the Ministers. But when **Article 164 of the Constitution** was drafted, the words **"chosen", "dismissal" and "discretion"** were omitted.

As per **Article 164**, the Ministers shall hold office **at the pleasure** of the Governor. But independent India has a **constitutional system**. The Governor is a mere **constitutional head** and can act only on the **aid and advice of the Council of Ministers**.

**B.R. Ambedkar** had stated in the Constituent Assembly that there is no **executive function** which a Governor can **perform independently** under the Constitution. So, choosing a Minister and dismissing him are no longer **within his discretion**.

**What is the stand of the judiciary regarding the position of the Governor in India's Constitutional setup?**

In **Shamsher Singh and Anr vs State Of Punjab (1974)**, SC held that the President and Governor are **custodians of all executive and other powers** under various Articles.

They shall exercise their **formal constitutional powers** in accordance with the **advice of their Ministers** except in under few circumstances mentioned in the constitution.

Similarly, in **Nabam Rebia vs Deputy Speaker**, a Constitution Bench of five judges reaffirmed the law laid down in **Shamsher Singh**. It further held that the **discretionary powers** of the Governor are limited to the **postulates of Article 163(1)**.

**What should be the best course of action in such a scenario?**

Any call to remove a Minister is an **appeal to moral sense rather than a legal requirement**. For the Governor to remove someone unilaterally is nothing but a **constitutional misadventure**.

It will be desirable if Ministers facing charges **quit on their own**, or they are **removed by the respective Chief Ministers**.

In the past, the framing of charges in the trial court has led to Ministers being removed, but it remains a **moral high ground**. It is not a **mandatory feature of the constitutional system**.

22. [Message from the NIRF rankings](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Message from the NIRF rankings**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **1st July 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Education.

**News:** The Department of Higher Education released the India Rankings 2023, also known as the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). This year over 5,000 institutions were ranked and the top 100 institutions (in some cases up to 200) were declared in each category.

**Why is there a debate surrounding NIRF rankings?**

The NIRF rankings have generated considerable debate mainly about **accuracy and reliability of data** and the **relevance** of the data to the rankings.

But there has been a lack of discourse on the significance of these rankings for the Indian higher education ecosystem and the resulting policy implications.

**What do the NIRF findings suggest regarding the status of higher education institutions?**

The rankings highlight a **disparity in the research and academic output** across Indian higher education institutions. A small number of top-ranked higher education institutions (HEIs) produce a significant proportion (between 60 percent and 70 percent) of highly cited publications (HCPs).

The surveyed institutions represent only a fraction of the Indian HEI ecosystem, with over 35,000 institutions (around 90%) remaining unexplored. This indicates that a **vast majority of HEIs may not be contributing significantly to knowledge or skills development**.

Most graduates from Indian HEIs **lack employability skills** and require extensive retraining to become employable

With the exception of a few prominent HEIs, the majority of top-tier institutions in the country have **little international standing**.

**How can NIRF rankings be used to inform policy decisions for higher education system?**

**Recruitment:** The current interview-based selection process, opaque, biased and delayed, should be replaced with a more objective and transparent evaluation method. Additionally, HEIs should establish a system of incentives and disincentives to encourage excellence in faculty performance.

**Accountability:** To address the lack of accountability in public-funded universities and institutions, regulators and funders need to enforce strict accountability by linking funding to performance. Leading universities should be subjected to higher standards of accountability.

**Other policy measures:** It is necessary to implement an exit or consolidation policy for HEIs, allow the entry of for-profit HEIs, including foreign universities, and grant colleges the flexibility to affiliate with any university without geographical constraints.

**What should be done?**

According to a World Economic Forum report, 65 per cent of children entering primary school today will ultimately work in completely new job types that do not even exist today. Therefore, **knowledge creation and dissemination should be participatory and forward-looking**.

Current policies in higher education create artificial constraints and barriers to entry. To promote innovation in teaching practices and flexibility in learning, it is essential to **encourage lateral entry** of practitioners and other experts to HEIs.



### 23. [The case for a Uniform Civil Code](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The case for a Uniform Civil Code**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **1st July 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Significant provisions of Indian Constitution, GS 1 – Indian Society

**News:** The constitutional provision for a uniform civil code (UCC) in India is a complex and sensitive matter that requires careful consideration when discussing its aims, objectives, and implementation. Unfortunately, it is often misunderstood and misrepresented, leading to widespread misconceptions.

#### **What does the Constitutional say?**

**Article 44** under Part IV emphasizes the importance of a **uniform, not common, civil code** and directs the State to “endeavour to secure” it.

When **read with Article 37**, the makers of the Constitution wanted **uniformity to be gradually achieved through suitable amendments of existing laws and enactment of new laws**.

#### **What progress has been made in this regard?**

**Many new laws of general application have been enacted** over the years — like the Special Marriage Act 1954, Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 etc.

These laws **override conflicting provisions in personal laws** and contribute to the goal of uniformity in family laws.

Amendments have also been made to various personal laws along similar lines.

#### **Is UCC incompatible with Muslim law?**

There is a **misperception** that UCC is a **measure to abolish Muslim law**, which is commonly viewed as outdated and discriminatory against women.

In its authentic version, **Islamic law is not entirely incompatible with the modern society**. Justice Krishna Iyer had once said that Islamic law recognised the “sanctity of family life”. The divorce law of Islam is based on the concept of irretrievable breakdown of marriage.

#### **Can the four Hindu law Acts of 1955-56 and the Special Marriage Act of 1954 become model for UCC?**

The Hindu law Acts of 1955-56 initially **contained provisions conflicting with constitutional ideals of religious equality and gender justice**. While recent amendments have improved the situation, there is still room for further progress.

The Hindu Succession Act still **differentiates the course of inheritance based on the gender** of the deceased owner of a property. Additionally, under the adoption law, **a man requires his wife’s consent** for adopting a child, and even for giving their child for adoption to someone else, but **only if the wife belongs to the same faith**.

After an **amendment in 1976**, the Special Marriage Act of 1954 allowed succession to the properties of parties to civil marriages to be governed by the **Hindu Succession Act** instead of the Indian Succession Act **if both parties to such a marriage are Hindu**. This amendment did not apply to other communities, resulting in a lack of uniformity.

The Special Marriage Act and the four Hindu law Acts are **not applicable in certain regions**. In these areas, local laws of foreign origin are protected by parliamentary legislation or customary

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

laws are safeguarded by the Constitution. This situation **contradicts the objective of Article 44**, which aims for uniformity throughout the territory of India.

### **What should be done?**

A **representative group of acclaimed social reformers and legal academics should produce a draft** that is free of religious discrimination and gender inequality. It **must be extended to all citizens in all parts of the country**.

# General Studies Paper –3

### General Studies - 3

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#### 1. [Climate meet in France: It signals small steps towards improving climate financing architecture](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Climate meet in France: It signals small steps towards improving climate financing architecture**” published in **The Indian Express** on **26<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** challenges in climate financing

**News:** Recently, a summit for a ‘Global Financial Pact on Climate Change’ was held in Paris.

#### **What are the excerpts of the Summit?**

**Most delegates attending the summit arrived at a consensus that** multilateral institutions should find ways to unlock new climate investments. Also, debt arrangements should include disaster clauses.

**For instance,** the disaster clause may include a two-year pause on repayments after an extreme weather event.

However, representatives of the developing countries still feel that any changes in the funding ecosystem will be gradual.

**French President Emmanuel Macron** expressed a possibility that rich nations will meet their pledge for a \$100 billion annual fund for climate change initiatives in the Global South, by the end of this year.

This fund was originally meant to be received by the developing countries by 2020. However, **the failure to do so represents the failure of the global climate financing system and a sense of mistrust in climate negotiations.**

#### **What are the challenges present in climate financing?**

The current commitment of \$100 billion represents a fraction of the amount required by the Global South to develop resilience against climate change.

**A report presented at COP27 last year. It estimated that, excluding China,** developing and emerging economies **will require \$2 trillion annually by 2030** to support energy transition, adaptation, sustainable agriculture, and address global warming-related loss and damage.

#### **What measures have been taken to support developing countries?**

**The IMF announced Special Drawing Rights (SDR) of \$ 100 billion** to Global South. **France, Japan, and the UK also made SDR-related pledges.**

The World Bank also said it will **pause loan repayments for countries** struggling with climate disasters.

#### **What more can be done?**

Instead of the support from the developed nation, loans currently constitute the primary source of funds for climate financing. Therefore, financing support from developed countries must be fulfilled as soon as possible.

The demand of vulnerable countries at the summit in Paris for their need for grants and technology transfers should also be considered.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### 2. Gains from LLMs for India

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Gains from LLMs for India” published in “Business Standard” on 26th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

**News:** LLMs (Large Language Models) like ChatGPT are useful tools which will impact learning, working and exporting. The need is to devise mechanisms to harness their strengths and avoid their pitfalls.

#### What are the pitfalls of LLMs?

Firstly, LLMs are trained on the text available over the internet. But most of **the text on the Internet is problematic** and this is going to get worse, as the Internet is about to grow a hundred-fold with LLM-generated content.

Secondly, LLMs **lack a critical sense** in assembling the information from the internet, in judging what is appropriate and what is not and in forming a coherent picture.

Thirdly, LLMs can **make things up** and slip that into the output. (Hallucination)

#### How LLMs will impact worker productivity in India?

A study “Generative AI at Work” on the impact of generative AI found 14 percent gains for weak employees. However, it also found that it will not be beneficial to skilled employees.

At best, these tools can **close the productivity gap** between Indian workers and those from any first-world organization.

India has a very large low-capability workforce. LLMs can **increase the productivity** of these workers.

#### Why is a complex management system required for LLMs?

Mistakes made by LLMs are obvious to an expert, but a novice may not be able to point them out.

Therefore, a multi-layer management system for LLMs is required. In this system, first drafts will be produced by juniors using LLMs, which will be reviewed by experts. So that any mistake of the draft can be corrected by an expert.

There are at least **three situations** where a multi-layer management system for LLMs will yield great results:

**1) Email-based customer support:** With LLM support, the headcount of employees will go down and their productivity will go up. The minimum bar for recruitment in the Indian labour market might go down, thus permitting going down to workers with lower wages. This will yield improved profit.

**2) Computer programming:** ChatGPT is useful for translating a programme from one language into another, which Indian software companies do a lot. LLMs for programming can help build code that is inexpensive to maintain and enhance.

**3) English communication:** A lot of the Indian workforce has poor English and writes bad text in their communications. LLMs can help convert prompts into sound English, and thus improving intra-organisation information flows.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

Experts are needed to spot the mistakes made by the LLM. Becoming an expert takes decades of learning and practice. LLMs can disrupt this process as the beginners are not following the conventional learning practices now.

### 3. [Incentivise eco-friendly fertilisers](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Incentivise eco-friendly fertilisers**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **26th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian Economy – Agriculture Inputs

**News:** The growing awareness of the need to reduce the application of chemicals in agriculture is encouraging the use of eco-friendly alternatives like biofertilisers and biopesticides.

#### **What is the need of eco-friendly fertilizers and pesticides?**

Biofertilisers and biopesticides are equally or **more effective in promoting plant growth and protecting crops**. Also, they **do not damage resources** like soil and water.

**Pests and pathogens have started acquiring immunity** against the chemicals. New and mutated versions of existing pests and diseases have also begun to emerge.

**Consumer demand** for products cultivated without the use of harmful chemicals is steadily increasing. Start-ups are also playing an important role in producing and promoting bio-products.

Biopesticides are **biodegradable**. They can prevent or cure plant diseases and control or repel pests without posing any environmental or health hazards. Their use reduces the risk of weeds developing immunity against specific weedicides.

#### **What are the advantages of eco-friendly fertilisers?**

Biofertilisers are beneficial for both plants and soils. They **enhance soil’s physical and biological condition** and contribute to soil fertility by supplying a range of macro- and micro-nutrients.

Biofertilisers **do not result in substantial nutrient losses** through gas emissions or leaching, which is a common issue with chemical fertilisers.

#### **Why eco-friendly fertilisers and pesticides need to be incentivized?**

Although biofertilisers and biopesticides have demonstrated their effectiveness, their current **market share remains inadequate**. Nonetheless, their utilization has been steadily increasing at an annual rate of 7-8 percent over the last five years

This rate may rise to over 10 percent in the next five years, due to **favourable government policies** and **growing demand** for organically grown products.

The need is to **incentivise greater public and private investment** in developing newer fertilisers and pesticides which minimizes use of hazardous chemicals.

It is neither feasible nor advisable to completely replace conventional fertilisers and pesticides with bio-based alternatives. However, it is crucial to promote the trend of increased utilization of biological farm inputs.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### 4. [Manipur — this is not a time for finger-pointing](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Manipur — this is not a time for finger-pointing**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **26th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Internal Security

**Relevance:** Internal security in in northeast

**News**- Manipur’s two major communities, the Kukis and Meiteis, have been on a **bloody communal clash** since May 3. After nearly two months, the State remains tense, with over 120 lives lost.

#### **What is interlink in mutual warfare as evident from the Manipur crisis?**

The current standoff in Manipur shows how the hills and valleys **depend on each other** for their **mutual welfare**. One community does impact other communities even if they live separately.

The **integral geography** of hills and valleys, and any move to **disrupt this integrity** can be a source of a sense of insecurity for another.

Some of the deadliest conflicts in the world were always implicit in **shared geographical destinies**. Example- Russia’s response to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s overtures in Ukraine.

#### **What are the concerns of Kuki and Meitei people?**

**Meitei**– There is silent and **non-aggressive ethnic cleansing** of Meiteis from Manipur’s hills in the decades since India’s Independence. There is a need to acknowledge the accumulated pain and humiliation of confinement.

Their **demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status** is also a response to accumulated pain and confinement.

**Kukis**– The Kukis have suffered from **unjust humiliations and a sense of persecution** by the **insensitive government policies**. The government has pushed policies such as **drives against poppy plantation, illegal migration and encroachment into reserved forests**.

#### **What is the way forward to resolve the conflict?**

This is not the time for finger-pointing. The return of normalcy must be the priority. This initiative should begin from the leadership at the very top.

All stakeholders in this conflict can sit down together to evolve a way forward, with consensus, including structural administrative changes **agreeable to all, and for the benefit of all**.

### 5. [Focus on the millets value chain for fortified nutritional security](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Focus on the millets value chain for fortified nutritional security**” published in **Live Mint** on **28th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Agriculture

**Relevance:** measures needed to boost millet consumption

**News:** India is the world’s largest millet producer. India’s Pearl Millet production accounts for 40% of the world’s millet production.

#### **What are millets and what are its benefits?**

**Read Here:** [India’s Wealth: Millet For Health – Explained](#)

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

Millets can be grown on less fertile and acidic soils where wheat cannot be produced. **Pearl and finger millets can also act as an excellent substitute for rice** cultivation on land where there is high soil salinity.

However, despite its multiple benefits, the area under cultivation of millets has declined over the years.

**What are the reasons behind low production and consumption of millets?**

**Read Here: [Millet Production in India – Explained](#)**

**Due to the rapid urbanization**, the taste and preferences of consumers changed over time, shifting more towards ready-to-eat food using refined wheat flour.

As a result, India's per capita millet consumption fell drastically from 32.9kg to 4.2kg, while wheat almost doubled from 27kg to 52kg, between 1962 and 2010.

Further, **studies have also shown that households in India have lack of knowledge** on how to incorporate millets in their diets. **Taste is another reason** many people resist eating millets.

**What measures have been taken by the government to boost millets consumption?**

The Indian government named millets as **'Shree Anna' in the Union Budget 2023-24**.

The government also announced support for the Indian Institute of Millet Research, Hyderabad, as a centre of excellence for sharing best practices, research and technologies at the international level.

**[Click Here to Read More](#)**

**What more can be done to boost the consumption of millets?**

Rather than focusing only on one segment of the millets (spreading health awareness), **there is a need to focus on the entire value chain**.

This includes improved varieties while assuring millets better shelf lives, efficient processing and access to markets, branding, packaging, awareness programmes, and also collaborations with ready-to-eat brands.

**There is also a need for breakthroughs in productivity to make these crops more competitive and stimulate commercial demand**. The efforts taken to boost poultry egg demands in India can also be taken into consideration.

**What lesson can be learnt from the poultry egg industry?**

During the 1980s, poultry farmers in India faced a problem of low egg demand **due to the country's predominantly vegetarian culture**.

At that time, **B.V. Rao (father of the Indian poultry industry)** took inspiration from the Amul cooperative model to form a cooperative egg model. Thus, the **National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) was formed**.

However, the main challenge faced was low demand for poultry eggs. To overcome the challenge, **the NECC collaborated with a top advertising agency** and developed a creative jingle, **"Sunday ho ya Monday, roz khao ande,"**



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

It resonated well with the country's middle class and per capita consumption of eggs significantly increased over time. Hence, **a similar kind of aggressive campaign is needed for millets to boost its demand and consumption in India.**

### 6. [Flood control – Coherent policy needed to address recurring floods](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Flood control – Coherent policy needed to address recurring floods**” published in **Business Standard** on **28<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Disaster Management

**Relevance:** concerns with increasing floods and measures needed to address them.

**News:** There has been a significant increase in the incidence of floods due to the climate change in India. These incidents highlight the need for effective flood-mitigation action.

#### **What are some of the facts about floods?**

Unlike some other disasters, such as earthquakes, which can neither be predicted nor prevented, floods, in most cases, are predictable. They can also be restrained to minimise the losses.

**Around 12 percent of the country's geographical area is known to be flood-prone.** Out of these, **around 80 per cent of land can be protected against flooding.** However, required efforts have not yet been made.

#### **What are the reasons behind increasing floods in India?**

**First**, the catchment regions of rivers and their tributaries have seen uncontrolled deforestation and degradation of vegetation, which has increased siltation and limiting the ability to store water. The discharge of waste into the rivers has added to this problem.

**Second**, the riverbeds and their floodplains, which are supposed to be buffer zones, have also been encroached upon.

**Third**, the regulation of water flows in river systems through coordinated opening and shutting of floodgates of dams has been lacking.

**Fourth**, urban floods have also increased these years due to lack of proper town planning, improperly maintained drainage systems, illegal encroachments, etc.

**Must Read:** [Urban Floods: Causes, Impacts and Remedies – Explained](#)

#### **What are the challenges in tackling floods in India?**

**a)** there is no single agency to oversee the flood-management task across the country, **b)** there is also no specific statutory provision for flood management in the Indian Constitution, **c)** while the India Meteorological Department makes rainfall predictions, the job of flood forecasting is entrusted to the Central Water Commission, **d)** post flooding, rescue and relief work is carried out by national- and state-level disaster-management agencies while rehabilitation and restoration works are handled by local civic bodies, **e)** flood management is also not present in any of the Constitution's three lists.

These are some of the challenges that hinders proper flood management in India.

#### **What can be the way ahead?**

The challenges need to be addressed urgently, and in a holistic manner, to combat the recurring floods.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

**A high-level expert panel**, similar to the Rashtriya Barh Ayog (National Commission on Floods) of the 1970s can also be set up, to thoroughly analyze all the issues related to floods and propose a practical action plan to address them.

### 7. Bad Billions' BFF: Socialism

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Bad Billions' BFF: Socialism**” published in “**Times of India**” on **28th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

**News:** An analysis on billionaire wealth across developed and developing countries reveals that socialist policies can backfire by concentrating rather than spreading wealth. It also favors those who inherit wealth over entrepreneurial individuals.

#### **What was the focus of the analysis?**

The focus of the study was **leading markets** – developed and emerging countries. The analysis measured **changes in billionaire wealth as a share of GDP**.

It categorized billionaire wealth as **inherited and earned or self-made**. It tagged the billionaires in rent-seeking industries like real estate or commodities as “**bad billionaires**“, and the billionaires in productive sectors like technology and manufacturing as “**good billionaires**“.

It assumed that **populist revolt** is most likely to target wealth seen as excessively large and inherited rather than earned, and more likely corrupt than productive.

#### **What are the findings of the analysis?**

Worldwide, the **number of billionaires has increased sharply** over the last two decades. There were 500 billionaires worth a total of less than \$1tn in 2000; in 2023 there are more than 2,500 worth over \$12tn.

Billionaires remain a **potential protest target**, particularly in countries with evidence of growing anti-rich sentiment. These include nations with **deep socialist roots**, including France, Sweden, Russia and India.

**France** is the world's heaviest spending welfare state. It has seen protests earlier this year as billionaire wealth nearly doubled over the last five years to 21% of GDP (85% inherited). **Sweden's** billionaire wealth equals 24% of GDP, and nearly two-thirds of it is inherited.

**The United States** experienced a surge in billionaire wealth, reaching 18% of GDP in the last five years. This led to the rise of politicians calling for wealth redistribution and support for President Biden's push for new wealth taxes.

Among emerging markets, in **India** and **Russia**, total billionaire wealth exceeded 20% of GDP. Russia had the highest share of “bad billionaire” wealth at 62%. India saw a decline in the presence of bad billionaires but experienced a boom in good billionaires, particularly in manufacturing.

Nations like **South Korea**, **Taiwan**, and **Poland** had less bloated billionaire classes. These countries restrained wealth inequality through small state intervention or embracing capitalism after breaking from socialist systems.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### How do socialist policies lead to the concentration of wealth?

**Increasing regulation favours the super-rich** because they have the lobbyists and money to navigate the impact of regulations.

Since 2000, a significant portion of funds injected into their economies by the governments to sustain growth has **fueled the expansion of financial markets**. Since the super-rich own most of the financial assets, they gained the most.

The findings put into question the belief that a more socialist government is the solution to the challenges faced by capitalism.

### 8. Central bank credibility is key to achieving a Goldilocks economy

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Central bank credibility is key to achieving a Goldilocks economy**” published in “**Mint**” on **29th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy

**News:** To uphold its credibility, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should strive to achieve its 4 percent inflation target while accurately estimating India’s real equilibrium rate of interest. (The RBI decided to leave the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 percent).

Why is central bank credibility important?

Central bank credibility is important, particularly in **steering an economy after a shock** such as a financial crisis or a pandemic.

Central bank credibility makes disinflation more manageable, and the interest rate increases needed to stabilize inflation expectations are less severe.

Why is there a two-percentage point band on either side of the target of 4.0 percent?

It ensures that the RBI **does not overreact to the short-term inflationary pressures** of temporary supply shocks and maintains a medium to long term view while conducting monetary policy.

While it gives the RBI **operational freedom** in the short run, the mandate over the medium term is to keep inflation near 4 percent.

Sticking to this mandate ensures monetary policy credibility.

What will be the impact of RBI’s efforts to bring inflation close to the target of 4.0 percent?

Maintaining the current level of interest rates for an extended period will **impact economic activity negatively** during a period when the Indian economy is growing at a steady rate, neither too fast nor too slow.

The consecutive increases in the repo rate have brought the **real interest rate close to equilibrium levels** and have also anchored inflation expectations.

However, as anticipated inflation declines, it is important to ensure that the real repo rate does not rise excessively.

Why is estimating the equilibrium real interest rate challenging?

The ideal real interest rate in an economy depends on various interconnected factors, including savings behaviour, investment activity, demographics, and potential growth rate.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

However, estimating the equilibrium real interest rate is challenging as it is **not directly observable**. Additionally, the estimate of the equilibrium real interest rate **can change over time**.

Economists from the Bank of International Settlements have suggested that the **central bank's actions** can influence the real equilibrium interest rate, which is commonly believed to be beyond its control.

### 9. Mahalanobis in the era of Big Data and AI

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Mahalanobis in the era of Big Data and AI” published in the “The Hindu” on **29th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Science and Technology

**Relevance:** Issue related to use and regulation of Big data and AI

**News:** The article explains how Mahalanobis would have responded to challenges created by Big data and AI.

#### **Why does India need a Mahalanobis view today?**

With the advent of the Internet, there has been a **flood of data**. This is widely perceived as the **era of Big Data**. The recent developments in **artificial intelligence** are also transforming our lives and lifestyles. AI is threatening to replace millions of jobs without creating alternatives. It is also aiding in spreading disinformation.

During COVID-19, there were **numerous contradictory projections**. The country's **COVID-19 response** could have been much stronger if the data is handled effectively.

#### **How Mahalanobis might respond to the challenges faced by the world today?**

Mahalanobis also encountered a Big Data problem when his large-scale surveys yielded lots of data. Mahalanobis persuaded the government and succeeded in procuring the **first two digital computers** of the country at his Indian Statistical Institute. It ushered in the age of computers in India.

Mahalanobis would have **embraced the power of AI in enhancing human productivity**. He could possibly be able to lead **Big Data analyses** considerably better than anybody else.

Mahalanobis successfully introduced the revolutionary concept of **built-in cross-checks** into his surveys. These cross-checks can be **instrumental in regulating AI**.

Mahalanobis envisioned statistics as a new technology for increasing the **efficiency of human effort**.

Even today, someone like Mahalanobis, could be the best person to **handle tons of data**. He can use technologies for **human welfare and national development**.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### 10. Why states are falling short on capital spending

**Source**– The post is based on the article “Why states are falling short on capital spending” published in the “The Hindu” on 30th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Government budgeting

**Relevance-** Issues related to government finances

**News-** Today, Indian states are at the forefront when it comes to capital expenditure. Aware of this, the Centre has been incentivizing them in a big way. But the outcome is far from optimal.

#### What’s the importance of capex?

Capex creates assets. These improve the **efficiency of the economy**. A capital expenditure on port will speed up transportation of goods and people. It will **reduce logistics costs**.

They contribute to **future economic growth**. A factory set up today will create jobs and its output will add to the **gross domestic product** in future.

**Revenue expenditure** does not create any asset and contributes to present growth.

#### Who should be spending on capex?

Ideally the **bulk of the capex** should be done by the private sector. Government should play a **supportive role**. However, the private sector in India is reluctant to **invest in capex**.

As a result, the government is investing heavily for capex with the hope that it will trigger **private investment**.

Here the states have come to play a larger role as their **combined capex spending** is more than that of the Centre. In FY22 states spent ₹10.5 trillion on capex compared to the Centre’s ₹8.4 trillion.

#### How are states being encouraged to spend more?

The Centre is offering states a **50-year interest-free loan for capex**. In FY23 it approved ₹95,147 crore and for FY24, ₹1.3 trillion has been allocated under the scheme.

The Centre has also been releasing **tranches of tax devolution** early to help states **front-load capex** rather than wait till the end of the fiscal.

#### How have states fared on capex?

According to a study by Bank of Baroda, 25 states have cumulatively achieved **76% of their capex target in FY23**. They had budgeted ₹7.49 trillion and spent ₹5.71 trillion.

Karnataka, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Bihar exceeded their target. Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Odisha spent over **80% of the budgeted amount**.

Andhra Pradesh was the **worst performer** spending just 23% of allocated funds.

#### Why are states falling short despite support?

Firstly, states are legally mandated under the **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act** to keep their **fiscal deficit** under control.

States are unable to reduce their **revenue expenditure** on salaries, pension, subsidies. They are cutting down on capex to meet the **deficit norms**.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

States are also constrained by a **lack of projects or skills to implement them**. There are **state-level political disruptions** such as government instability or elections which come in the way of decision-making pertaining to capex.

### 11. [Independent boards for all agencies](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Independent boards for all agencies**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **30th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

**News:** In a recent speech, the governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) highlighted the significance of independent board members for overseeing Indian banks. This emphasizes the need for government agencies and regulatory authorities to also have a majority of independent directors on their boards, just like private companies.

#### **What are the principles of good organization design?**

Good organization design aims to **minimize the concentration of power** and **encourage the involvement of diverse perspectives** and interests in decision-making. This leads to better decisions and reduces the likelihood of mistakes.

Instead of relying solely on individuals, effective organization design focuses on **creating strong institutions** which ensures consistent and high-performance outcomes over long periods of time.

#### **What are the three big ideas on good governance for organisations?**

1) **Independence of outsiders** on the board from the management and from controlling shareholders. 2) **Independent directors should be in the majority** to hold the inside directors accountable. 3) One of the **independent directors should be the chairperson** of the board. This will reduce the concentration of power and enhance the authority of independent directors in relation to the management.

These ideas are implemented through legislation such as the **Companies Act** and regulations enforced by the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**, particularly for listed companies.

#### **How are these ideas applicable to government organisations?**

These concepts are **equally applicable** to government organisations and provide the framework through which the governance of all government organisations can be examined and improved.

An independent director in a government-controlled organization should not have any affiliation or involvement with the state apparatus in any capacity.

#### **What is the present status of governance in government organisations?**

Presently, different approaches are adopted by different organizations to address governance issues.

Most regulatory authorities have boards consisting mainly of **whole-time members (WTMs)** who tend to **conform to the chairperson**. This results in an excessive concentration of power which obstructs effective debates and decision-making.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

Also, there is a **lack of independent directors** (part-time members or PTMs), which further weakens checks and balances within these boards. Notable exceptions are the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority.

In certain organizations, the power is centralized entirely in the chairperson, and the role of the board becomes insignificant.

### What should be done?

A **unified set of principles** should be applied by creating a comprehensive law, like the Indian Financial Code. Such a law would include all financial agencies and standardize and improve governance practices across them.

In every organisation, the board must have oversight of organisation design and processes and have **enough power to hold the management accountable**.

### [12. How NRF aims to boost research in higher educational institutes](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the articles **“Express View on National Research Foundation: Changing the game”** and **“How NRF aims to boost research in higher educational institutes”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **30th June 2023**.

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

**News:** The Union cabinet decided to set up a National Research Foundation (NRF) as an apex body to promote, fund and mentor scientific research in higher education institutions across the country.

### How does the NRF aim to boost research in higher educational institutes?

**Broad-basing research:** One of the main objectives of the NRF is to involve colleges and universities in scientific research. Currently, less than one per cent of the nearly 40,000 institutions of higher learning in the country are engaged in research. Research activities are mostly carried out by specialized institutions, while colleges and most universities primarily focus on teaching. NRF aims to end this artificial separation between research and education by acting as a bridge between specialized institutions and less-funded colleges, universities, and polytechnics.

**Research in social sciences:** The NRF would also fund and promote research in humanities, social sciences and arts. As of now, research in these areas has very limited sources of funding.

**National priorities:** The NRF aims to identify priority areas in which science and technology interventions can help larger national objectives like clean energy, climate change etc. Also, NRF would coordinate research developments in mega international projects like LIGO, in which India is involved.

**Funding:** India spends less than 0.7 percent of its GDP on research and development. This has a direct impact on the quality and quantity of research output. The core objective of NRF is to sharply increase funding for research from government as well as private sources.

**Partnerships:** Partnerships between industry, academia, government departments, and research institutions have led to groundbreaking developments in the global knowledge economy. But in India, even scientists in top institutes struggle for securing funding. The NRF has the potential to overcome these challenges by addressing funding challenges and bureaucratic hurdles.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

The estimated allocation of Rs 50,000 crore over the next five years is **not substantially higher than the current spending**. Completing projects and making full utilization of available resources is very important. The funding can increase once the NRF starts to make an impact.

The NRF project is modelled on the **National Science Foundation** in the US which is an independent federal agency. The dominant presence of the government in the NRF may be unavoidable due to its significance but the government should **ensure the institution's autonomy**.

### 13. [Finally India's Moon Moment?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Finally India's Moon Moment? – Artemis is inked and Chandrayaan-3 ready to launch. Lunar missions are as much about technology and talent as geopolitics**” published in **The Times of India** on **1<sup>st</sup> July 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** Measures needed by India to boost its lunar missions.

**News:** India is set to launch Chandrayaan-3, a lunar exploration mission.

#### About Chandrayaan-3 Mission

[Click Here to Read](#)

#### What is the rationale behind taking lunar missions?

Lunar missions are costly. **According to the ISRO**, the Chandrayaan-3 mission is estimated to cost about Rs 600 crore.

Despite high costs, it is necessary to take complex lunar missions because –

1. **a)** undertaking complex lunar missions can enhance ISRO's capabilities in practical satellite-based space applications,
2. **b)** it also helps India grow a pool of highly skilled engineers and scientists.
3. **c)** Geopolitics also influences India's plans. India's plan to go to the moon is also influenced by the US and China's plan to go there and set up permanent bases.
4. **d)** Deep space travel, whether to the moon or Mars, may also spark people's imaginations, encourage their scientific interest, and motivate the young to pursue careers in the field.

#### How can the Artemis Accord help India in its lunar mission?

India has recently signed the [Artemis Accord](#). Even though the accord prioritizes America's interests at various points, it can still be beneficial for India.

India can –

5. **a)** gain from the accord because they open the door to participating in America's Artemis program for lunar exploration,
6. **b)** also leverage America's spacefaring capabilities and gain access to important technologies, while maintaining the autonomy of its own lunar exploration plans.

**In return, India can offer its Artemis partners**, ISRO's expertise in launching cost-effective space missions as well as the potential of its promising private space sector.

To do this, **India must facilitate local companies to offer their products and services** like developing scientific payloads and software to foreign partners.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

**ISRO can also help fund an expanded lunar program by offering reliable launch facilities for foreign payloads.**

### **What can be the way ahead for India?**

Along with collaborating with the US, **India should also look at collaborating like-minded countries like France, Japan, and Australia.**

Besides diplomacy, **India also needs a well-defined roadmap outlining its goals on the moon for the next twenty years.**

India has also opened the space sector for private players and has released its [space policy](#). However, to achieve its ambitions, **India will need a law that governs space activities and provides clear rules for** regulating this high-technology sector.

### 14. [Sound of the Cosmos – India’s telescope game can get even better](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Sound Of The Cosmos – India’s telescope game can get even better**” published in **The Times of India** on **1<sup>st</sup> July 2023**.

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

**News:** Einstein initially proposed the existence of gravitational waves in 1916 as **an extension of his theory of general relativity**. It was in 2015 that America’s LIGO detectors could observe and confirm these.

Recently, an international consortium reported the detection of a captivating “hum” sound of gravitational waves reverberating across the universe.

### **What are gravitational waves?**

Gravitational waves can be understood as ripples in the fabric of space and time.

[Click Here to Read More](#)

### **How was the sound of gravitational waves discovered?**

Scientists from seven Indian institutes along with the [Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope](#) near Pune played key roles in uncovering the new and first evidence for low-frequency gravitational waves permeating the cosmos.

**Read More:** [India’s largest radio telescope plays vital role in detecting universe’s vibrations](#)

### **What efforts have been taken by the government to study gravitational waves?**

The Government of India has granted final approvals for LIGO-India, and land acquisition has taken place in Maharashtra for the project.

However, it is crucial to recognize that any such scientific project requires robust and sustained support for research and exploration. Hence, the government should also take these factors into consideration.

**Must Read:** [What is LIGO-India, the Indian node in the global network of labs to probe the universe](#)

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### 15. [On urea prices: Fertiliser for thought](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “on urea prices: Fertiliser for thought” published in “The Hindu” on 23rd June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian Agriculture – Agricultural Inputs

**News-** On Wednesday, the Union Cabinet approved the continuation of the urea subsidy scheme with a view to ensure supply of the fertiliser at the same price. Government has committed a total amount of Rs 3,68,676.7 crore over three years till 2024-25.

#### **What are some facts about urea sales and pricing in India?**

Urea sales in India crossed a record **35.7 million tonnes during 2022-23**.

The maximum retail price of urea has remained **unchanged at Rs 5,360 per tonne** during the last nine years.

#### **What are issues with use of fertilisers in the agriculture sector in India?**

The present government’s initiatives such as **compulsory neem coating, reducing the bag size** from 50 kg to 45 kg, and **launch of the Nano Urea** have not brought down the **consumption of the urea**.

Urea **retails at a fifth or even less** than that of most other fertilisers. It does not **incentivise farmers** to cut back on its use.

The **disproportionate application of N** has, over time, resulted in **diminishing crop yield response**. Studies have shown that 1 kg of N, P and K used to yield **12 kg-plus of cereal grains** during the 1960s. But now it yields only a **5 kg surplus now**.

#### **What is the way forward for the fertiliser sector?**

The Modi government has proposed the introduction of **sulphur-coated urea**. It would be more **economical and efficient than fertiliser**.

The idea of using urea as a **carrier product** for delivering sulphur to crops isn’t bad. The government should allow **urea, di-ammonium phosphate and other commodity fertilisers** to be **freely coated with all secondary and micronutrients**.

Further, the MRPs of such **fortified fertilisers** must be set free. If the **yield benefits** from applying **sulphur or zinc-coated urea** are significantly more from ordinary urea, the farmer will be paying extra.

It could also pave the way for the **price decontrol of urea** and bringing it under the **nutrient-based subsidy regime**.

### 16. [Reality check for startups](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Reality check for startups**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **1st July 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy

**News:** Byju’s is facing numerous challenges and has become a negative symbol for the country’s once-thriving startup sector. India’s start-up sector consists of over 80,000 registered entities. Out of them, at least 70 per cent will eventually fail, while some 100 have achieved unicorn status.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### What has been the contribution of th

Some of the ventures have become substantial businesses and **employ large numbers**, including gig workers.

The bigger start-ups have had a **transformative impact** on the Indian marketplace by creating a more **favorable operating environment for small businesses** and **changing consumer habits**.

Additionally, some startups exhibit promising **technological advancements**, indicating potential for further growth and innovation in the sector.

### what are the challenges faced by startups in India?

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done [\[DB2\]](#)

Make it a single heading on what are the challenges faced by startups in India. Merge [\[AS3\]](#)

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### [17. Uniting for big-bang discoveries](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Uniting for big-bang discoveries**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **1st July 2023**.

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

**News:** In recent developments in physics, two major announcements were made by different research groups.

Gravitational wave researchers using pulsars revealed the **discovery of gravitational signals that potentially date back to the Big Bang**. In the second discovery, scientists have created a **picture of the Milky Way** by mapping the origins of detected neutrinos.

### What is the significance of these discoveries?

The latest discovery about gravitational waves could help us **understand the violent processes of black holes and galactic mergers, and how the Big Bang occurred**.

Researchers studying neutrinos generated a **picture of the Milky Way galaxy as “seen” by neutrinos**

The technologies developed for these observations hold the **potential for future commercial applications**.

Both breakthroughs resulted from the efforts of large groups spanning multiple research institutions and nations which serve as a remarkable **example of international cooperation**.

### Why is it difficult to detect gravitational waves and neutrinos?

Gravitational waves are created by the Big Bang and black holes. These are **very long and weak waves** that require **highly sensitive equipment** for detection.

Neutrinos can only be detected through the energy they carry, necessitating **extreme sensitivity in detection methods**.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June [Fourth Week] 2023

### How gravitational waves are detected?

The first detection of gravity waves came from the **LIGO** (Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory), in 2015.

LIGO can only pick up signals from gravitational waves around 3,200 km long, whereas super massive black holes emit gravity waves of far longer wavelengths which can be detected by **using pulsars as natural detectors.**

### How are neutrinos detected?

The most sensitive neutrino detection facility, IceCube, is located at the South Pole. It utilizes **light sensors** buried 2.5 km under the ice, where it is completely dark.

When a neutrino passes through, it interacts with the ice, emitting energy that generates a distinctive **blue radiation called Cherenkov Radiation.**

As neutrinos do not interact or deviate from their path, the **energy trail can be used** to determine their origin.

Significance